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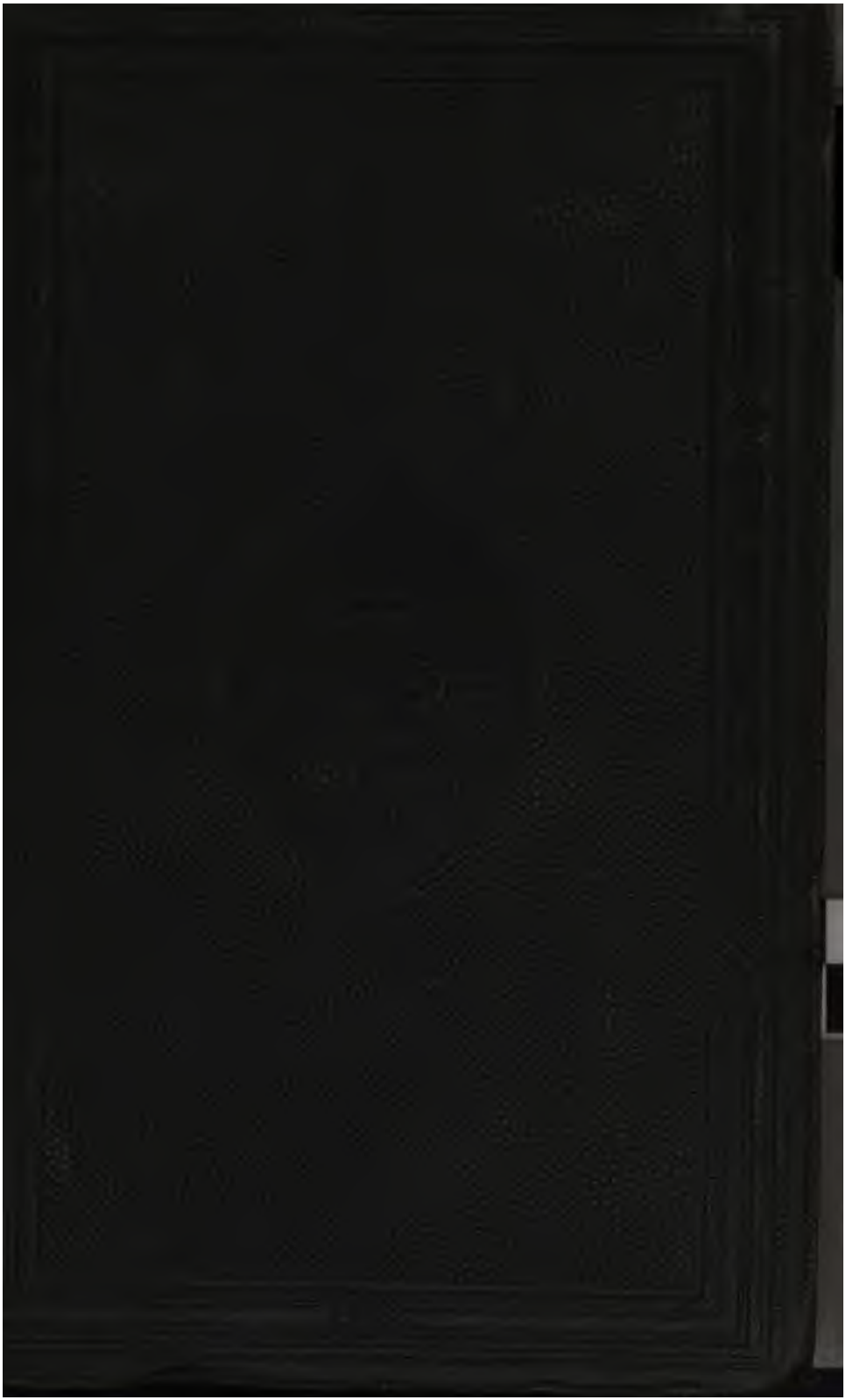

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MEMORIAL EDITION

OF

COLLECTED WORKS

OF

W. J. FOX.

VOL. IV.

ANTI-CORN-LAW SPEECHES,

Chiefly Reprinted from the "League" Newspaper;

AND

OCCASIONAL SPEECHES.

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AND

OCCASIONAL SPEECHES.

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THE

COLLECTED WORKS OF W. J. FOX.

ANTI-CORN-LAW SPEECHES.

No. I.

AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE.

September 28th, 1843.

[On Thursday, 28th September 1843, the Anti-Corn-Law League held its first monthly meeting in Covent-Garden Theatre; and, as the *League* newspaper informs us, "the vast space was crowded in every corner half an hour before the time for commencing the business" (at 7 p.m.). A report was read, detailing the operations of the League, and stating that the subscriptions exceeded 50,000*l*. The report—moved by Mr. Heyworth, and seconded by Mr. Scholefield, M.P.—was adopted. Mr. Cobden moved "an address of the Council of the National Anti-Corn-Law League to the people of the United Kingdom." In this document the League's plan of agitation was explained, and contributions to the extent of 100,000*l*. invited for the ensuing year. The address, having been seconded by Mr. Bright, was spoken to as follows by Mr. Fox:]

IN the able speeches of the mover and seconder of the address two points have been slightly passed over, or only incidentally mentioned, which I think tend very much to recommend that address to the adoption of the public, and the objects of its authors to their coöperation. One characteristic feature of the address is the plainness and frankness with which the plans of the League are told out. There are no claims of implicit confidence; there are no ambiguous promises; there is no endeavour to lead on the people towards results not specified; there is no saying, like a certain state physician, "Let me into office, give me the fee, and then you shall see my prescription;" but a

succession of measures are distinctly marked out, all tending towards a definite point, which point gained, the objects of the League must needs be accomplished, and towards which a movement is made as distinct, and, I apprehend—as these measures in succession are realised—as resistless, as the great operations of nature. They conduct us towards a result which no administration can resist, against which no law can stand, to that declaration of the will of the possessors of the political power of a great empire, which must be respected by all who aspire to administer its affairs, which cannot be resisted but in the dissolution of society, and before which any opposing power, any law, any institution even, however time-honoured, must pass away, as the leaves fall before the winds of autumn, or as snow vanishes in the sunshine of spring. And the men who propose this course of measures are plainly as honest as they are earnest in that for which they ask your coöperation. They make, themselves, the largest sacrifices that are made; and the very fact which has been thrown in their teeth, that they have an interest in this object, is their best justification. The interests of honest industry are surely one of the objects of the policy of a great empire. They have an interest in it; so have you; so have we all. Who that lives by eating bread has not an interest in the repeal of the bread tax? Who that is endeavouring to support himself and his family by commerce has not an interest in Free Trade? Who has not an interest in what advances the general prosperity of the country, even though his pursuits are artistical or intellectual, ministering to the spiritual rather than the material portions of our nature? For as one thrives will all thrive—they react the one upon the other—the starving do not encourage literature and art—they are bound together by the ties which Providence formed to uphold society; and it is because they and we have an interest in this matter that we are determined the question shall not drop until it is satisfactorily settled.

I say all classes have an interest in this matter; even they who are represented as the great opposing class—the landlord class. For what has made England the paradise of landowners but its being the workshop of the world? In the progress of manufacture, if machinery has enabled one man to do the work of two hundred, it has also em-

ployed two hundred, and two thousand, where one was employed; all bread eaters, coming to the landowner for his produce. And while the manufacturers of this country have been thus advancing in the last century, its growth of wheat has been tripled every year, and the rents of the farmers have been in many cases quadrupled. The landlords gain by railways enhancing the worth of their property; they gain by the rich and flourishing community arising around them; and if for a while they should have to make some slight sacrifice—if at first their rents should fall in the change—why, they will still be gaining that which gold could never buy. By the graceful concession they would be gaining the good will and gratitude of their fellow-countrymen; they would gain for themselves an exemption from the execration that pursues their class—from the infamy of their names in history—from the reprobation of their consciences, and the pollution of their souls.

The confidence which the Council expresses in the successful operations of the measures they trace out is, I think, a well-founded one. For when have recognised principles failed of meeting with success—when in the world's history? Some affect to sneer at abstract principles; but abstract good is the real, practical good, after all; the exceptions made to it are some little, dirty contrivances of those who would have trade free for others, but would reserve the monopoly for themselves—would have Free Trade as to what they buy, but restrictions as to what they sell; and who tell us that those principles are sound and excellent things in reference to all other commodities whatever, but that there is some one exception left—the exception of that in which the exceptor deals; and each in turn will tell you that Free Trade is the noblest thing in the world, except for corn, except for sugar, except for coffee, and except for this, that, and the other, till once, even in the House of Commons, it came to an exception of second-hand glass bottles. I say this is a principle recognised by all—recognised even by the Government in its measures of last year, however paltry the nature and limited their operation; recognised in the Canada Corn Bill; recognised in the repeal of the laws against the exportation of machinery, the last rag of that form of monopoly; and the repeal of the duties on imports must follow that of

restriction on exports. A principle thus practically recognised by foes, as well as by friends, is certain of success. Thus was it that the great principle of Negro liberty was recognised, and thus eventually carried. And did not the recognition of a principle emancipate the Roman Catholics of Ireland? Ask Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington whether this was not the secret of the success of that measure.

I say this anticipation of triumph is well founded. For have we not the eternal power of truth? have we not the agency of a press that cannot be restricted in its advocacy of such principles? Have we not meetings like these—not only such meetings as these, but meetings held in the rural districts, where the opposing class is challenged to the combat? and have we not that power to which the address specially points, which with great propriety is introduced on such an occasion as this, that power which has ever been the cradle and is the bulwark of liberty, political and commercial,—the power of great cities, the agency of civilisation?—of great towns and cities, that first reared their towers as landmarks when the deluge of barbarism in the middle ages was beginning to subside; that in the civil wars of this country afforded the serf a refuge from his baronial oppressor, and gave him food and gave him freedom; towns and cities, that won the rudiments of representation, that formed our parliaments, that asserted the people's power of self-taxation, that gained one step after another in the progress of order and of human rights and enjoyments; where commerce throve, where the arts have flourished, where the poor serfs of the soil, that vainly struggled and shed their blood in the Jack Cade and Wat Tyler insurrections, at length had their emancipation achieved for them. Cities, in which flourish luxuries and arts which make it life to live; which are the heralds of progress, as they have been the safeguards of the past; where congregated multitudes shout for justice, and demand that the oppressed shall be emancipated, raising a cry at the sight of wrong which reverberates from earth to heaven, and makes the oppressive class, however strong in station and in power, quail as before the thunder of the day of retribution.

And this is the second point in the address upon which

I wish to fix your attention—the importance that it assigns to towns and cities. It looks to them as the machinery by which this great question is to be wrought out to its final, satisfactory, and triumphant decision. And well and rightly does it so, because it is in towns and cities that the wrong most deeply exists which it is the aim of the League in its noblest efforts to redress. It is in cities that the pressure is felt most extensively—that the iron enters most deeply into the soul. It is not merely in the expression and feeling of such an assemblage as this that I read the condemnation of the laws that uphold monopoly; it is in what you know—it is in what leads you here. It is something, it is much to many here in this vast and brilliant assemblage, that from day to day the pressure upon their circumstances is rendered more and more hard by the artificial limitations of trade; it is something, it is much to many here, that from time to time one hostile tariff after another makes its appearance, shutting us out of markets on the Continent which had been open; it is something, it is much to many here, that in the most frequented thoroughfares of this great metropolis house after house should be shut up, exhibiting a spectacle of desolation where once were thriving tradesmen and enjoying families; it is something, it is much to many here, that the pressure comes at each extremity, that the candle is burning at both ends,—on one side they are exhausted by paying to the relief of the poor, and on the other side they are plundered by claims upon them for the income tax; it is something, it is much to many here, that through every station, in every rank of life, the pressure is felt—the demon seems to be omnipresent, and they cannot escape his pestiferous influence. But even this is not the deadliest evil of the Corn Laws. Did one want to exhibit it in this great theatre, it might be done; not by calling together such an audience as I now see here, but by going into the by-places, the alleys, the dark courts, the garrets and cellars of this metropolis, and by bringing thence their wretched and famished inmates. Oh, we might crowd them here, boxes, pit, and galleries, with their shrunk and shrivelled forms, with their wan and pallid cheeks, with their distressful looks, perhaps with dark and bitter passions pictured in their countenances, and thus exhibit a scene that would appal the stoutest

heart, and melt the hardest; a scene that we would wish to bring the prime minister of the country upon the stage to see; and we would say to him, "There, delegate of majesty! leader of legislators, conservator of institutions, look upon that mass of misery! That is what your laws and power, if they did not create, have failed to prevent, have failed to cure or mitigate." And supposing this to be done, could this scene be realised, we know what would be said. We should be told, that "There has always been poverty in the world; that there are numerous ills that laws can neither make nor cure; that whatever is done, much distress must exist." He might say, "It is the mysterious dispensation of Providence, and there we must leave it." "Hypocrite, hypocrite!" I would say to him, "urge not that plea yet; you have no right to it. Strike off every fetter upon industry; take the last grain of the poison of monopoly out of the cup of poverty; give labour its full rights; throw open the markets of the world to an industrious people; and then, if after all there be poverty, you have earned your right to qualify for the unenviable dignity of a blasphemer of Providence; but until then, while any restriction whatever exists, while any impediment is raised to the well-being of the many for the sordid profit of the few—till then you cannot, you dare not, look this gaunt spectre of wretchedness in the face and exclaim, 'Thou canst not say I did it.'"

Why, the Corn Laws and the policy of our agricultural legislators hunt poverty and wretchedness from their own districts into ours. The landlord class call themselves feeders of the people. They speak of their ability, if properly encouraged and protected, to feed the nation. What feeds the people? Not the growing of corn, but the people being able to buy it. The people are no more fed, for all the wheat that is grown, than as if there were so many stones covering the rich valleys of the country. It is in the price required of the people who eat it; and if that is beyond the power of the multitude to give, the landlords become starvers instead of feeders of the people. Agriculture cannot support its own population; it is not in the course of nature that it should, for one man is vested with the ability to raise food for the many. Twenty-eight per cent of the population are amply sufficient to cultivate the

ground so as to yield food for the remainder of the hundred. How are the rest to be fed? By opening markets for the products of their industry, that they may obtain the means. In the natural growth of the population in the rural districts they find a superfluous population—that superfluity is continually on the increase. People talk much about machinery throwing hands out of employment; these very same people raise a cry of the evil results of Corn-Law repeal in throwing the cultivators of the ground out of employ. Why, are they not themselves throwing them out of employ every day? Have we not the Royal Agricultural Society and local agricultural societies all over the country, where premiums are offered of from 3*l.* to 50*l.*, from 50*l.* to 100*l.*, for the invention of machines to cheapen the tillage of the ground—to do that by mechanical ingenuity which had heretofore been wrought by human labour? Are there not machines for every process and operation? machines for preparing and draining the ground for the reception of the seed, machines for ploughing and sowing, machines even for the splitting the beans that the cattle eat, machinery for reaping the produce, for thrashing the wheat, and for cutting the chaff,—is there not machinery from the beginning to the end? is there not mechanical power, chemical power, horse power, steam power?—and, what perverts it all, and lies at the back of all of the abuse, political power. These associations come forth with their splendid array of great names—some men who figure in one house and some who figure in another; some who are chiefly known as politicians, and others as warriors, until we find among them that great name whose judgment in machinery relates more to the sword than the plough, and who best understands the machinery by which battalions are mowed down, and the harvest of carnage is gathered in. And there is this remarkable difference between the employment of machinery in the one case and in the other, in which it has been so often assailed. When machinery is employed in manufacture, what is the natural result? Production is cheaper, goods, apparel of various kinds, are brought to market at a lower rate. The use of it is diffused more extensively in society; people have enjoyments and accommodation which they did not possess; the demand has increased, and this again reacts upon production; more hands are employed,

and in the natural course of things there is found to be more work, more wages, and more enjoyment. But in the employment of agricultural machinery, the intention of the Corn Law is not to let those inventions affect the price—not to let them cheapen corn and to extend the enjoyment of wholesome food, but to keep up the price while the cost of production is cheapened, in order that the surplus may go into that great swamp of all, the receptacle of rent, still crying, "Give, give," and never satisfied.

Well, in this way there is more of the surplus population who go on in the natural course of wretchedness, who fall from one stage to another, in the agricultural districts than any where else. Up they troop to some great town; they come, men, women, and children; they toil their way along the hard roads, and then, without friends or help, they look around them, they ask for work, they ask for alms: they endeavour in vain to find that for which they are seeking, for monopoly has been there beforehand; having driven them out of the country, it bars the occasion for their employment in the towns, and so they are beaten and battered from pillar to post; they have, perhaps, to incur the frown of power by some irregular attempt to support themselves, for the police hunt and hound them for endeavouring to sell apples or lucifers in the streets; they are sent to the station-house, they are brought out of that to be committed to gaol; they go in beggars, they come out thieves; they pass through various stages of disease in the only factory into which they can get—in those great factories of typhus which abound in large towns. One union workhouse sends them to another, the overseers send them to the magistrates, and the magistrates send them back to the overseers; and at last, in this hopeless and heartless strife, they drop by the way. Death completes what monopoly began; and we, inhabitants of great towns, know that all this is passing around us, and we are quiet and acquiescing, and conscience never demands, "Are not you accessory to these murders?"

Wisely has the Council appealed to the great towns, for there is the power. What can the poor farmer do? His money is in his landlord's ground, and the man who has money in another man's ground must needs be a slave. His freedom is buried there with it, not, like the grain, to

germinate, but only to rot and dissolve in corruption. It is where great bodies are congregated that they can stand by one another; where not the importance of the individual, but the importance of the many, is the great thing for all. And how independent are such places, if they but knew their position, of all that aristocracy is, or can do! Landlords! They built not this magnificent metropolis; they covered not these forty square miles with the great mass of human dwellings that spread over them; they crowd not our ports with shipping; they filled not your city with its monuments of science and art, with its institutions of literature and its temples of religion; they poured not that stream of commercial prosperity into the country which during the last century has made the grandeur of London, quadrupling its population, and showing that it has one heart with the entire community. They! Why, if they were to spend—if you could impose on them the laws which they would impose upon you, and they were bound to spend—in this metropolis all they received in their rents; if there were no toleration for French wines or foreign luxuries; if they were prohibited from storing and locking up in their remote galleries, works of art, real or pretended, which they prize as property; if here, amongst the shopkeepers of London, they were bound to spend that which they had obtained by their rents,—it would be wretched repayment to you for what you have forfeited by the absence of Free Trade. It is, as it were, to make war upon towns and cities, to cut off their supplies of food, to limit their resources, to levy upon them other taxation; for, in the vast spread of this metropolis, where there are nearly two millions of inhabitants, probably not less than six or eight millions sterling is wrung from your resources in different ways, not going into the pockets of the landlords, but being lost by the way, a great portion of it, in order that their extortion may keep up a veil on its horrid countenance, and have something of the show of legitimate taxation, instead of being apparent and downright plunder.

The time is opportune for the appeal which has been made to the inhabitants of this metropolis, and for the appeal to those among you who enjoy the franchise of the city of London. There will, in a very short period, be an opportunity for you to show decidedly that the principle of

Free Trade is consecrated in your hearts and guides your votes. I trust the contest will be by no means a personal one, but one wholly of principle, and that no ambiguous pretensions, no praise of Free Trade, with certain qualifications and accommodations necessary to the hustings, will be tolerated for an instant; but that the plain and simple test will be the complete, total, and immediate abolition of the monopoly of food. I know not why one should hesitate to say, upon such an occasion as this, that the placards which I see round about this theatre express the feeling and preference that I think may be honestly entertained for Mr. Pattison as the representative of that great city.* In fact, a very excellent case for Mr. Pattison's election was made out by the *Times* this morning, without mentioning his name. It was urged in reference to one supposed to be about to become Mr. Pattison's opponent, Mr. Attwood; and the *Times* very strangely recommended that gentleman to withdraw his determination not to stand the contest for three reasons: firstly, because he was opposed to the Poor Law; secondly, because he was a Conservative; and thirdly, because he almost won the last election. Now, whatever those reasons are worth for Mr. Attwood, they are worth infinitely more for Mr. Pattison. I know not what his opinions are specifically on the subject of the Poor Law, but the man who is the determined enemy of the Corn Law will extract the venom from the Poor Law. Give us Free Trade; let the industrious and the honest have the means of getting bread, and it will little matter what the Commissioners of Somerset House may order as the dietary of the paupers in union houses. Nay, I believe that under the course of prosperity which such an enactment would produce, no very long time would elapse before the ruins of baronial halls, that now commemorate the past ages of feudalism, would have their companions in the ruins of the workhouses, commemorating the past ages of monopoly. If Mr. Attwood be a Conservative, and a man of business, we know that Mr. Pattison is a man of business too, and a Conservative—not of oppression, not of taxation upon food, not of restriction upon trade—but a Conserva-

* A vacancy in the City of London was occasioned by the death of Sir Matthew Wood: the candidates were Mr. Pattison and Mr. Thomas Baring. The former was elected by a majority of 165.

tive of that which alone can give the country permanent existence in its grandeur, and the development of its natural resources to its full moral and intellectual growth. To come to the last reason—if it be a good recommendation to Mr. Attwood that he almost triumphed in one election, why, Mr. Pattison quite triumphed in two elections. Here then, I hope, will one of the first great electoral experiments be tried, that not merely every member of the League, but every inhabitant of London, who can honourably influence the result of that election, should feel himself bound to do so, as amongst his earliest pledges of adherence to this great cause—the commencement of his answer to the appeal which has now been made to him for support. Other ways will soon open themselves; and I trust that its past backwardness will be amply redeemed by the metropolis in the readiness with which it will respond to the great call now made for its pecuniary liberality, and in the ardour which many will manifest in other modes of coöperating in this great work, showing that we look to yet higher principles and considerations than any that belong either to rural districts or to particular classes, and that we regard this as the common cause of humanity. And so it is; for Free-Trade principles are the dictates of Nature plainly written on the surface of land and ocean, so that the simplest may read them and imbibe their spirit. For that Power which stretched abroad the land, poured forth the ocean, and piled up the mountains; that Power which gave Western America its broad prairies, and reared the gigantic and boundless forests of the north; that Power which covered with rich vineyards the smiling hills of France, which wafts sweet odours from the "spicy shores of Araby the blest," which has endowed this country with its minerals and its insular advantages, and its people with their indomitable Saxon energy, with their skill, their hardihood, their perseverance, their enterprise;—that Power which doth all this, evidently designed it for the common good, for the reciprocal advantage of all; it intended that all should enrich all by the freest interchange, thus making the world no longer the patrimony of a class, but the heritage and the paradise of humanity.

No. II.

AT LIVERPOOL.

October 4th, 1843.

I FEEL all the more deeply and strongly the reception you have so kindly given me on account of the resolution with which it was prefaced,* and for which, as an elector of London, I render to you and to this meeting my sincerest and warmest thanks. That resolution cannot but serve the cause of Free Trade in London and throughout the country, because it gives an example to the whole kingdom of the sympathy which the enemies of monopoly—in all localities, and disregarding all particular interests of particular districts—ought to evince on every occasion, and especially on every electoral occasion; for every vacancy now in the representation opens a new battle-field to the champions of Free Trade and those of monopoly; and each as it occurs must be contested—earnestly and strenuously contested—as if the fate of this country depended solely on each particular election. In London, throwing aside the jealousies and rivalries that frequently alienate different sections of those who are moving onward in the same direction, the citizens have chosen their candidate; the tendered alliance of the Anti-Corn-Law League has been readily, thankfully, gladly accepted. The expression of your opinion will have its result in animating both; and the contest will be fought, as all such contests must be hereafter, as the struggle of one great cause—the cause of humanity and of national prosperity against that of monopoly, of food-taxation, and of national degradation and impoverishment. And between what two localities could there be such an interchange more appropriately carried on than between London and Liverpool, each owing its aggrandisement to trade and commerce; each built up from

* The meeting was the usual monthly gathering of the Liverpool Anti-Monopoly Association, and the resolution called upon the citizens of London to elect a free-trader.

comparative nothingness, not by feudal power, not by the exercise of despotic authority, least of all by monopoly; but each having thriven as industry and enterprise developed themselves in the growth of our gigantic manufacturing system—each being stupendous monuments of the power and advantage of the system—and each now, I trust, becoming pledges that it shall continue until it works out the whole of that good for individual and social being which it seems to be the plan of Providence thus to accomplish?

The population of London has been quadrupled since the improvement began in the manufacturing districts. Were it not for the trade of the country, it would be the comparatively petty town that it once was; and a monarch might still, as a monarch once did, possess his flourishing vineyard upon Holborn Hill, and the Chapter of St. Paul's might still have, as it once had, very fine grass-lands in Norton Folgate. Well, but for that same system, what would you be here, but with your population of 8000, instead of something like 300,000; but with your single dock, the only one you had for half a century, instead of your upwards of 100 acres of dock, and your about seven miles of quay? You would still be paying the petty duties for your seventy or eighty ships, instead of the four and a half millions a year which you contribute to the customs of the country; you would still be, in short, the petty "little creek of Liverpool," the appendage of Chester, instead of being the magnificent establishment that you are; and for all your streets and squares, for your institutions, your Exchange, your spacious warehouses—for all your buildings for amusement or for instruction—you would only have so much land, producing, perhaps, as many potatoes as there are now human beings here assembled.

I say, let London and Liverpool, then, interchange their sympathy and encouragement on this great question, so vitally interesting to both; and the compliment which you have paid London, I shall be happy to find London returning to you, and saying, "Now, Liverpool, is your time. You told us of our duty at the critical moment; we now tell you of yours: let not this great, this first commercial town in the empire, be represented in the British parliament any longer by a brace of monopolists." And I

am not exclusive in these things. I should be very glad if our monopolist opponents would imitate us in this. Let them interchange their encouragements; and as their course seems rather to be one of modification, however trifling and varied in degree, than of strict adherence to the principle—the sordid and selfish principle—which is the basis of their scheme, why, let Liverpool monopoly say to London monopoly, as Peachum does to Lockit in the *Beggar's Opera*: "Brother, brother, we have both been in the wrong." We have our fight—and a great one it is—to achieve in the metropolis; one in which, if we succeed, and I understand there is the most encouraging and animating prospect of success, the blow will be felt, the dart will quiver, in the very heart of monopoly. And we receive, as a presage of success, the encouragement of Liverpool to this combat—of Liverpool, which was mainly instrumental in striking down the great East-India monopoly, not, I think, to your own disadvantage, nor without furnishing some argument in the experience of the mercantile classes of this town, how much more advantageous a free trade, even with the remotest regions, is, than a strict monopoly ever can be. I know not that there is any thing wrong in those who are toiling in a common cause, and working in it with what opposition makes an arduous toil, communicating with one another, and encouraging one another. I therefore had no anticipation, in accepting the invitation of your committee to come here on this occasion, that I should expose myself to any particular questionings as to my reasons, motives, or purposes in so doing. But I find that there is a catechising tendency in some quarters here which has in a manner called upon me to answer why I am here, and with what object; and certain questions are put in one of your newspapers, the *Courier* of this day, which it may be worth while to bestow a word or two upon. It says: "The Anti-Monopoly Association are to hold another meeting at the Amphitheatre this evening" (I think the Anti-Monopoly Association ought to be obliged to the editor for this gratuitous advertisement), "where Mr. Fox, of London, is to undertake the task, however supererogatory after the visits of Mr. Bright, of instructing the people of Liverpool in the true principles of political economy, the right way of

exercising the elective franchise, and other things which it would be extremely convenient for a few grasping manufacturers, who desire to sacrifice every other interest in the nation for the aggrandisement of their own, that they should know."

Now this writer, professing to know so much of my mind at this time, ought, to justify those pretensions, to have known something more, and to have been aware that I have written and have spoken on this subject before there was any pretext whatever for calling it a manufacturer's question—before the League was in existence, even in thought—before any individual of the capitalist classes had taken up the matter; I had then expressed myself most unreservedly and strenuously upon it, in that light in which I have since regarded it, as most deeply interesting every one, but not as the question of manufacturing capitalists, or of any other class exclusively. I do not mean but that I would have their property respected, that that which they have honestly earned should have its fair chance of further accumulation; but capital can usually take care of itself. My interest in the question has been as the working man's question, whose bread no class in the country has the right to tax. If there be in the country such manufacturers as have been described; if there are those who regard their fellow-creatures simply as so many engines by which to work out their own profit, with no further sympathy or care for them, soul or body; if there be masters who feed their steam-engines with fuel, and their wheels with water, but are careless whether their workpeople and their wives and children are fed or clothed; if they take more care in packing their bales of cotton than they feel about the comfortable lodgment of those who are employed in their service; if the sole business and interest of their lives is to screw what money they can, not only out of material existence, but out of the blood and bones, the sinews, the brains, the lives, of their fellow-creatures,—I can only say that with such manufacturers I have no feeling in common. If any of them be really free-traders, why, I regard it in them as one virtue mixed with a thousand crimes; and my only solicitude about them is, if they come in my way, to awaken the reproaches of their conscience, and to stimulate them to rise, if they can, from

the love of money to the love of humanity. But when I see men of whom nothing of this sort can be alleged with any show of truth—when I behold the industrious and the enterprising in trade and commerce led by the strong conviction of their minds of the injustice and the impolicy of the existing law to withdraw their attention from business, and to devote themselves from morning till night, and from year to year, to the adjustment of a great national question—when I behold them asking the country for large subscriptions, and themselves making the largest subscriptions that are tendered, in aid of the great cause for which they are combating — when I find these men, if they do indeed seek their own interests, seeking them only in connection with the interests of the entire community of which they are members—why, then I say that with such I am ready, heart and soul, to coöperate; and that to fling in their faces the fact that they are manufacturing capitalists can only disgrace those by whom such expressions are thought to be an imputation.

But the writer asks an answer to this question—"Some who were captivated by the glowing prospect set before them" (he is speaking of the farmers at Knutsford) "by Messrs. Cobden and Bright, of increasing commerce, increasing towns, and an increasing demand for the produce of the country to supply the wants of the increasing population thus got together, have been induced to ask themselves where, in the first place, this commerce was to come from. Looking to the Leaguers for an answer, they find that it is to arise from the importation of foreign corn, to be paid for in English manufactures."

And a very good answer, although it is a Leaguer's answer; but this is not the whole answer of the Leaguers. The answer of the Leaguers is: Look to your own columns. What are your own themes of rejoicing? Have we not been told for the last several weeks, with a continued flourish of trumpets, that cotton is up? Has not an increase, and a valuable increase so far as it goes, in the manufactures and commerce of the country been loudly proclaimed abroad? and has it not been represented as that which is to produce the downfall of the League, when it is in truth an answer to this very question, and the justification of the reasoning on which the leaders of the

League have ever founded their proceedings? Why is there a revival of trade, but because food has been cheapened, following in this the experience of past years, showing that whenever food is cheap, manufactures become more thriving, and that, on the contrary, when food is dear, then the pressure begins to be felt anew, and the alternation commences by which distress is tossed backward and forward from the agricultural classes to the manufacturing classes, and back again from the manufacturing classes to the agricultural classes; showing clearly that we are under a false system, and telling the plain truth, which this writer seems disposed to blink, that cheap bread does not lower wages, but makes thriving trade, and enables the wages of the workmen to go much further than they would under any other circumstances.

He follows this up with another question: "How is a measure, the specific object of which is to encourage the importation of foreign grain, which, as a necessary consequence, must supersede theirs" (the grain of the English farmers) "in the English market, as otherwise it could not be imported,—how is such a measure to benefit them? Whatever advantage may accrue to commerce, how is the bringing of corn from abroad to promote its growth at home?" This has been already in part explained to you by an excellent friend near me. Whatever promotes trade promotes the consumption of corn. It enables the labourer to buy more, and thereby it stimulates production beyond the limits of the power which originally gave the impulse. But this is not all. If every quarter of foreign corn that comes into the country displaces a quarter of English-grown corn, why is any importation at all allowed? why do we on the average import about a million of quarters per annum, going up at times to three or four millions? What is all this but an injury which the present system works, and which it works in the most intolerable manner? And it would be something even to correct the mode of this foreign corn coming in; it would be something to pay for it regularly in manufactures, instead of the continual derangements now occasioned thereby in the monetary system of the country; it would be something to have the trade put on such a wholesome footing as that corn, instead of coming in, as it did lately, in foreign vessels, on account of the

unexpectedness of the order, might come always in British vessels, employed with aforethought for that purpose. It would be something to make the importation of foreign corn more of a trade and less of a lottery; to make it a business in which capital might be fairly vested, with the prospect, the encouraging prospect, of regular gains therein, instead of making it a speculation which every now and then ends in the ruin of one after another, and excites the spirit of gambling in a country that should only live by honest industry. If every quarter of imported foreign corn displaces one of home growth, what are we to say of the breaking up of new land in our own country? If the importation from abroad be, as is pretended, an injury upon the farmer,—and the farmer is the person always professedly looked to,—why then every enclosure bill is a cheat put by the landlords upon their own farmers. It is bringing fresh acres into cultivation to throw the produce of the old ones out of the market; and the bills which within the present century have caused the enclosure of two millions and a half of acres have been a war waged by the landlord class upon their own dependents—a war to aggrandise their own estates at the expense of the cultivators of the more ancient parts of those estates. But this does promote consumption, and they know it. Less than a century ago not more than one-third of the population of this country was fed upon wheaten bread. Why did the consumption of wheat extend? Because manufactures arose to furnish means for the purchase of corn, and its being at times cheapened thereby did not prevent its becoming more profitable. You make eaters when you cheapen the price of the necessaries of life. We have been told that five millions in the United Kingdom—told with a cold irony of expression that one would not willingly repeat—that five millions "rejoiced upon potatoes." Why should not these five millions rejoice upon wheat? Where, then, would there be any apprehension that the importation of foreign corn would displace from the market a single grain supplied by the home producer?

I have nothing further to say to these questionings, except that I disclaim the imputation of coming here to teach political economy. The assembly that I witness to-night, and the speeches that I have heard to-night, show

that you have already an admirable school of your own in political economy, where I should much rather present myself as a learner than as a teacher. The article from which I have quoted does indeed show that the extension of the knowledge of political economy, that the gathering together of such a magnificent assemblage as this from all its varied ranks and classes of society, to attend, seriously and thoughtfully, to the truths of political economy, is by no means a gratifying subject of thought in those quarters; and it also indicates that there is still some darkness remaining, and that perhaps, notwithstanding the many charities that flourish in this town, it would not be amiss if one other were added to the number, and if some charitable ladies would set on foot a penny-a-week society for the instruction in political economy, and in sound logic, of the literary champions of the falling cause of monopoly.

My hostility to the Corn Law is based on no recondite speculations; it is on the broad principles which we may trace on the very surface of the question. I object to it as a violation of justice. It insults that innate feeling of the human mind which tells us to render to each that which is due to him, and especially to respect the rights of the poor, the distressed, and the laborious. It appears to me to be a violation of the first dictates of all moral codes that have ever appeared on the face of the earth with any pretensions to the reception of mankind. It takes from man what he has earned in the sweat of his brow; it deprives him of that which is not only his as a debt of justice, but which ought to be his by the kindness and forbearance of his more fortunate brethren, if he had not fairly earned it. It seems to interpose between Heaven and earth; when the solemn prayer is uttered that the Supreme Power would give us our daily bread, monopoly interposes, and dares blasphemously to say that Providence shall not give it until it has first taken toll on the passage. It says, "You shall not feed the hungry unless first the loaf that you give, even to the paupers in the poorhouse, shall pay its dues; as it goes to the most wretched classes in the land, it shall pay its dues to the wealthiest classes in the land; a slice, a huge slice of it, shall be abstracted from the perishing, in order that a large proportion of what is thus wrested from their wants may go into the treasury of the

affluent." In such a case as this, all need of political economy, all need of deep research and recondite questioning, seems to me to be utterly at an end; and I take my stand on such a question with the generous language of one of the great statesmen of this country, that "that which is morally wrong can never be politically right."

I feel hostile to the Corn Laws because they are at variance with the spirit of the nation. They depart from, they attempt to obstruct, the characteristic principle of British progress. They are alien to the whole course of our experience as to what most leads onward in this country, not only the growth of its population, but the growth of intelligence, of riches, of the means of enjoyment diffused through all classes. For what was this island of ours when it was simply agricultural; when that feudal principle of which some modern writers seem so enamoured was flourishing in all its glory? What was it then, not merely as to the condition of the upper classes, of the barons, who had to put their mark instead of writing their names, and the floors of whose palaces were strewn with rushes instead of being covered with the rich carpets of modern days?—but what was the working man's condition under the agricultural system of this country? Measuring the wages of the labourer by the number of pints of wheat that he could purchase, it seems that in the close of the fifteenth century (we have this on record) his wages were worth 199 pints of wheat; about the middle of the sixteenth century they were worth no more than 82 pints; and by the commencement of the seventeenth century, no more than 42; thus being reduced in value three-fourths in the course of little more than a century. And then came enactments about the middle of the seventeenth century, fixing a maximum of wages—a maximum, mind you—so far enslaving the working classes of this country, by limiting the value of their daily toil, which their superiors needed, and denying them the remuneration which, in a fair and open market, they would have been sure of obtaining. Agriculture—which can never, I think, advantageously exist in a nation like ours as an exclusive system—having done this, manufacturing industry began its career. Your Arkwrights and your Watts arose, and led on that long and magnificent course of things, in which

the produce of the country in wheat has been trebled, in which the revenue of the owner of the soil has been quadrupled, in which the population has gone on doubling itself, and enabling this country to bear the greatest burdens of taxation that perhaps ever were imposed upon any country—to struggle with them bravely, and even now, after all the pressure, to need but a fair field and no favour, but its inherent energy, to go on augmenting the greatness of the community, and thereby increasing the amount of individual enjoyment.

I oppose the Corn Laws because they seem to me altogether grounded on fallacious pretences, hollow and rotten in the very basis of any argument that can be erected for their support. What, for instance, has been almost the only plea of a public kind that has been dwelt upon? "We want," they say, "to make this country independent of other nations,—independent for its food." How is that man independent who cannot purchase food at all? His dependence is not on the owner of the rich fields, whose golden grain has been waving in the sunshine, and is now stored in barns and granaries. He is not allowed to go there, and to take what he wants. The landowner is not his feeder, but the manufacturer who gives him work and pays him wages, without which he would never get at one atom of the landowner's produce. And if he has to earn the wages to buy home-grown corn, by producing goods of which the foreigner is the purchaser, why, then, it is on the foreigner that he is dependent; and all the restrictions in the world cannot sever that bond. Besides, what dependence is there that is not mutual? Make Great Britain independent of all other countries!—it is only another phrase for making all other countries independent of Great Britain. This is the policy to which these wise statesmen point. They would make the world independent of our country, when—without blood-stained fields, without dyeing the ocean with human gore, without a succession of wars devastating to financial resources as they are destructive to human life—but by spreading the products of our industry over the whole face of the earth, by supplying the wants, wherever wants were felt, in any section of the great family of mankind, and by taking back whatever was produced there, the chain of man's dependence would indeed be a golden

one; and that moral influence would be purchased by this country—honourably purchased—over all the nations of the earth, which the lord of empire could never wield, nor the most triumphant battle ever secure. No wonder that monopoly cannot satisfy us with its doings; it has never been able to satisfy itself. The history of the system is but one of successive tinkering, making one hole faster than another was patched up. First, the cupidity of the class showed itself in actually giving a bounty on the exportation of corn. We had to pay—the people of this country, with not a bit too much of food to put into their mouths, had to pay—for the food being sent abroad, in order that it might be sent abroad at a profit. Then, when importation became absolutely necessary to prevent actual starvation, there was first a law devised in 1804, to keep up the price of grain to 64*s.* per quarter; another was passed in 1815, to keep it up to 80*s.* per quarter; another in 1821, which never came into operation, was intended to fix the price at 70*s.*, and obstruct all importation whatever until it reached that price. Then another law was passed in 1828, to keep the price somewhere about 60*s.*; and another in 1842 was to keep it—so far as Sir Robert Peel's* measure can have effect—at about 56*s.* a quarter; notwithstanding which it has since fallen to between 40*s.* and 50*s.* a quarter. And now, those who enjoy the monopoly in the sense of imposing it, and those who enjoy it in the sense in which the negro might be said, of old times, to enjoy the whip—in the sense of feeling it—are alike dissatisfied, and are calling out that this last tinkering has been tried long enough, and that it will be better to demolish the old, rickety implement altogether, and go upon a better system—the system of Free Trade.

In the hard struggle that has to be maintained, and which will yet be a hard one, for the abolition of this iniquitous impost, a plan has been marked out by the leaders of the Anti-Corn-Law League, which has, to my mind, all the characteristics of a grand, an efficient, a triumphant scheme. It traces, step by step, the course to be taken. The League proposes, first, to collect the registration lists from the entire country; it will know who are the holders,

* The Corn Importation Act (5 Vict. c. 14), imposing a sliding scale on the importation of wheat, &c.

the deeply responsible holders as they must be, of political power—the electors of the kingdom. Knowing them, it will put itself in connection with them, it will receive information, it will transmit information, it will endeavour to combine them in one body; so that places where they are strong may support those where they are feeble; and so that in all there may be a systematic effort to put down the bribery and corruption by which elections have been disgraced, and enable the opinion that is formed to speak out freely by its legitimate and constitutional organs. They propose encouraging electoral organisation, as you are encouraging the electors of London in their struggle; rendering all honourable support, by the dissemination of tracts, to the efforts which they make; being ready, whenever they are called on to assist in the great contest, if candidates are not forthcoming, to suggest those who may be thought able to serve their cause; and thus going forward, progressively but surely, to the time which must come, when the majority of those who made the present members a parliament will say that they are not in unison with it, but differ from it on the question of Free Trade and monopoly. And in the names of those—the majority of the electoral body—the League will then say to the sovereign of these realms: "May it please your Majesty to dissolve a parliament that misrepresents the people, and authorise them to call one which will, at any rate, speak their opinions, and coincide with their own views of their interests."

It was to my mind an impressive lesson to legislators, the mode in which the announcement was received at the great meeting at Covent-Garden Theatre last week—the enthusiasm, the prolonged acclamations, which followed the announcement that the League did not recommend any more petitioning of the present Parliament. I rejoice that you feel with them on this point. All right to be petitioned has been forfeited by a parliament like the present,—a parliament elected by corruption upon false principles, whose very existence was founded in delusion,—a parliament which has falsified every promise that it made, and, while not answering the views of those whom it flattered for their votes, has yet not adopted the more just principles of those to whom it was opposed,—a parliament

that seemed to be created but for one purpose, that of changing the reins of government, but of marking out no intelligible policy for the future rule of this great empire,—a parliament that has disregarded the petitions of the people, offered not merely by thousands and tens of thousands, but by hundreds of thousands and millions,—a parliament that has adhered to no one recognised principle, that has not even respected that inferior tie, the bond of party, but whose leaders and followers are continuing their recriminations and their sarcasms,—a parliament that has redressed no one grievance, that has rectified no great wrong, that has conceded no single right, and whose members at last scampered from London, telling on their cards the only truth that parliament has told in its long session, and with all its multitude of speeches and division, "D.I.O.,"* to shoot grouse and partridges. Not to such a quarter do we look for redress, but to that manifestation of opinion which I trust this meeting will serve to promote, to that general coincidence in the plans sketched out by the Council of the Anti-Corn-Law League, which I am glad to find is to be brought before your earnest attention, and to the combination in working out that plan of all hearts and hands, through all classes, and in all the districts of this great empire. I hope that the opulent here will aid that call, and that they will set a great example of liberality to the country in their contributions; that the electors here will yield their coöperation by preparing themselves to instruct their present representatives, or to choose their future representatives, so as to combine their parliamentary efforts for the total abolition of these iniquitous Laws; and that all, electors or non-electors, of whatever class, will remember that it is the battle of opinion we are waging, and that opinion is important to all. Remember that those who, under the forms of law and the mask of public good, have gratified the cupidity of the class to which they belong, when the mask is stripped, when the sophistry is demolished, when they find that from the highest to the lowest throughout the country they stand bare and exposed in the naked deformity of their endeavours to enrich themselves at the expense of the common good, will flinch

* An allusion to the old joke of the wag who substituted for *P.P.C.*, D.I.O.: "D—me! I'm off."

from the frowns, from the reprobation, from the dreaded execration of their countrymen, and will rather conciliate by concession than prolong an obstinate opposition, which can only lead to the disorganisation of society.

For where are we if agitation be continuous, if the depression be continuous, if these gleams of sunshine in a temporarily reviving trade pass away, as pass away they soon must under the present system—where are we, where is society, but in danger of dissolving into its original elements, of owning only the law of the strongest, of completing that misrule which has raised the shout of national existence in Ireland, which has rent in twain the ecclesiastical establishment of Scotland, which has put Wales in a state of open and partially successful insurrection, which convulses England from one end to the other, and which cannot be prevented—with the ignorance of a large proportion, especially of our rural population—from having its fearful climax in deeds of violence and desperation, bringing down again from his gibbet the skeleton of "Swing," and sending him through the country with the dagger of the assassin in one hand, and in the other the torch of conflagration. From these perils, and such as these, it is but by a timely effort to give property its security, labour its rights, and industry its encouragements; it is to make a people thriving, prosperous, and happy, and thereby the state great and glorious,—that the efforts of the League are directed, and which cannot, I imagine, be in any way so materially promoted as by their complete success in the immediate, total, and final abolition of the Corn-Law monopoly, and, in the train of it, the abolition of all other monopolies. And in this they are following out those great principles of civilisation which have been at work in the world for many an age, which have raised nations and aggrandised them, and made them ministers of good in the world for their time, or for some specific purpose. For there is nothing uncertain, nothing arbitrary or capricious, as has been sometimes represented, in trade more than in any thing else. It has its laws, its laws inviolable in their operation, wise in their construction, beneficial in their tendency, as those great laws of nature which give us the sun to shine by day and the moon by night, and rule the planets in their courses, and marshal the stars in their

constellations. The poet was guided by a one-sided view of the question when he said that—

> "Trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
> As ocean sweeps the laboured mole away;
> While self-dependent power can time defy,
> As rocks resist the billows and the sky."

If there is such a power, it is certainly not in agriculture. There is no power more self-dependent than that of trade, based as it is on the common wants of humanity, and blending as it does with the progress of human civilisation. And hence the metaphor fails, as metaphors will fail poets when they are turned to an unphilosophical purpose. Let the "laboured mole" be swept away, and you of this great emporium know how soon industry and commerce may replace it—stretch it wider, and lay deeper its foundations.

The rivers of Sir Hugh Middleton and Brindley—rivers carried along through a course of country—those of Brindley especially passing through hills, over plains, and proudly surmounting those of nature,—those rivers flow on like the streams of nature herself; and while the scene of the battles of the old epic poem is the subject of interminable controversy—while they cannot tell us where Scamander flowed, or where the strife of Hector and Achilles had its termination—aqueducts and works of industrial usefulness remain; they show from age to age the strength of the principles in which they originate; and the very rocks themselves, while the engineer blasts them with his gunpowder, bow their proud heads down to their base, and the triumphal car of industry, the steam-engine—type of the progress of humanity—rolls over them, bearing its living freight, reconciling countries that were at enmity, uniting those that were at a distance, annihilating time and space, and proclaiming the miracles which God works; for God works by human intelligence, human energy, and enterprise, extending the spirit of trade and commerce, that enriches all nations by enriching one, and develops higher principles than its own; for as it advances, it represses the selfish feelings in which it seemed to originate, and shows that there is no real competition between individual and individual, no real anta-

gonism between nation and nation, but that the laws of trade and those of nature are the same as the laws of the religion which we revere; and thus working out the principles on which this society is established, till they lead forward to the magnificent result of the one great law of love and of universal brotherhood.

No. III.

AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE.

October 13th, 1843.

In the important choice which the electors of the City of London will in a few days be called upon to make, it is remarkable that the strongest ground for the return of one candidate is set forth in the address of the other candidate. "If I were asked," said Mr. Baring, in the explanation of his views and principles to his supporters last Friday,—"if I were asked whether I concur in the abstract justice of Free-Trade principles, I should answer, Yes." Here, then, are his professed principles—his professed wishes; and they are the principles that Mr. Pattison pledges himself to carry out into practice—they are the wishes that it would be the object of his parliamentary career to transform into realities. Why, then, is not Mr. Baring among the supporters of Mr. Pattison? Why is he not for the accomplishment of his own desires? Why is he not for the application of his own principles? Is it cowardice, or is it hypocrisy? Is he one of those who are ever "letting the 'I dare not' wait upon the 'I would,' like the poor cat i' the adage," or is he one of those who throw out good sounding phrases to catch the simple and unwary? Does he parade his general principles to catch your votes, and make his particular exceptions to guide his own? It is one of the commonest tricks of sophistry, when a man is flying directly in the face of a great principle, to acknowledge it in reverent phrase, and to put the antagonistic principle in the form of an exception; and this is the trick that runs through the whole of Mr. Baring's address. His statement of his adhesion to the Free-Trade principle is clear and broad, while the entire speech is made up of showing where and how this principle is not to be applied, showing how it is to be compromised for the sake of this or that class—for the sake of party—for the sake of revenue—the pretence of national defence—the pretence of humanity

to the negroes. But he advocates what in his own phrase is called protection—the right name of which is monopoly —which is not really an exception to Free-Trade principles, but is the very reverse of those principles. What he calls protection is that which enhances the price of your subsistence. Protection means that which diminishes the ability of your customers to buy. Protection is that which prevents the honest labourer from receiving the whole amount of his earnings. Protection means the varied forms which monopoly assumes from morning till night; and at the present moment, among other things, protection means the imposition of the income tax.

Whom would he protect? Look at his votes. He protects ecclesiastical establishments in their power and splendour, but he does not mean to protect the poor Dissenter from having his bed or his Bible seized for church-rates. He protects the wealthy voter, who can go to the poll assured that he shall suffer neither in pecuniary means nor in social standing; but he leaves unprotected the man whose straitened circumstances may make him a defaulter for a quarter in the payment of his taxes, and who needs the protection of the ballot to insure him from the threats and persecutions of the powerful. In short, his protection is protection for all that is powerful, but not for that which is feeble. It is protection for the oppressive few, but not for the oppressed and plundered many. I would endeavour, if you would give me your attention, to pursue the reasoning of his speech through the succession of his exceptions to his own general principle. He says: "Free-Trade principles must be modified by the need of defence of the country, by the necessities of the revenue, by the interests of particular classes, and by the dictates of humanity." That is to say, according to his own account, the Free-Trade principles to which he professes his adhesion are principles which he also thinks come in collision with the defence of the country, with its resources, with its important classes, and with humane and philanthropic feelings. An odd way this to recommend a principle. What does all this mean? His object I apprehend to be, under the name of a general principle which is good, to do something for a particular and monopolist interest. He quotes Adam Smith, saying the Navigation Law was among the

wisest of all the commercial regulations of England. But he only quotes a portion of that great man's opinion, and by no means that portion which has best stood the test of examination and experience; for the Navigation Law of which Adam Smith spoke was not the law that now exists. It was a law which it was found impracticable to carry out without injuring the interest which it professedly intended to promote. It was a law which the interference and reprisals of America and Prussia compelled the government of this country most materially to modify, until it has left only certain rags and fragments of it behind. It was a law which many of those statesmen whom Mr. Baring professes to revere felt it impossible to retain on the statute-book; Sir Robert Peel, I believe, having had a hand in reducing it to its present limited dimensions. But the paragraph which Mr. Baring quoted from was one which, if quoted wholly, would have given a very different colouring to the argument. I can scarcely call it logical honesty that he should have quoted Adam Smith's opinion from a lengthened passage, omitting not only the "perhaps" coupled with the words, but also the preceding sentences, which ran thus: "The Act of Navigation is not favourable to foreign commerce, or to the growth of that opulence which can arise from it. The interest of a nation in its commercial relations to foreign nations is, like that of a merchant with regard to the different people with whom he deals, to buy as cheap and to sell as dear as possible. By diminishing the number of sellers we necessarily diminish that of buyers, and are thus likely, not only to buy foreign goods dearer, but to sell our own cheaper, than if there was a more perfect freedom of trade."

And what, after all, is done for the defence of the country by this exception? Does the mercantile navy of England owe any of its real superiority to monopoly? Can we not—if it were not for other monopolies with which this is leagued—can we not build ships as stout and strong, and, without the Corn Laws, victual them as cheaply? and have we not sailors to compete with any others that are to be found on the shores of any country in the world? How, too, did the Navigation Laws make the mercantile navy subservient to the defence of the country? How but by that violence which the Navigation Law generated—that

foul disgrace to the civilisation of this people that it should so long have been endured—the practice of impressment? The defence of the country was such as can be wrested from the ranks of industry by the violence of a press-gang. We need no such interference as this to repel any hostile attack on this country; and a much surer way to provide for us, at all times and under all circumstances, the best of defences, would be to give the great mass of the people something more to defend than they possess at present. They will not fight for a bread-tax; they will not fight for a state of subserviency to the oligarchy that rides over them; they will not fight for institutions that work well for the rich, but ill for the poor—well for the powerful, but badly for the feeble. In the extension—the rapid and wide extension—that would take place by the abolition of commercial restriction, would be found a surer defence than arms have ever bestowed,—the defence of mutual dependence, and, growing out of that, mutual kindness. It is not by navigation-laws and press-gangs. The question which a pugnacious youth once asked a veteran boxer may have an answer in this case. "What," said he, "is the best attitude of defence?" "Why," said the old champion, "the best attitude of defence at all times is, to keep a civil tongue in your head." The peaceful operation of commerce entwining together the interests of nations, making them minister to each other's wants and to each other's enjoyments, the progress in that oneness of feeling and spirit, and that desire for the common welfare, that would be generated by the universal communication of mercantile energy and enterprise,—in these are found a far better defence than any other, which, in a conflicting and jealous spirit, has ever yet been devised; and if Burke was justified in calling honour the cheap defence of nations, we may say more of free commerce; it is not only a defence that is cheap, but it is a defence which tends to the abolition of poverty, and the enriching of all classes of the community.

Mr. Baring's next exception to Free-Trade principles is that which, he says, must ever be dictated by the revenue of the country. The gross iguorance which this displays has been already exposed. You have been told again, what has been so often said before, that with the taxes imposed for the purposes of revenue—honestly and wisely imposed

for that purpose—this agitation has nothing to do, but with taxes that are imposed not for the necessities of government, but to gratify the rapacity of a class. I think that his instances are scarcely happy. He says, if Free-Trade principles were carried out, it would be impossible to tax tobacco from 800 to 1000 per cent, or to tax tea from 200 to 300 per cent. Over this impossibility he seems to shudder; and in so fearful a result—from which he shrinks back aghast—he finds amply sufficient reason for the modification of his principles. The horrible event would happen that you would not have to pay four guineas for a pennyworth of tobacco, and would get for sixpence the tea for which you now have to pay 2*s*. This is a consummation—a state of things—not to be endured, and which he asks you to send him into parliament, that he may prevent his own principles from realising in your experience.

In coming to the exception to his principle derived from class interests, Mr. Baring—put forward as a commercial candidate of the City of London—fixes at once on a class; and what class, think you, is it? Not the merchants of the metropolis, not the traders and retail dealers, not the hard-working man. He pitches at once upon the agricultural class as a specimen of class interest, before whose monopoly Free-Trade principles are at once to bow their head, and to be passed by, as finding that there is no occasion whatever for their application. But this is only one instance of the disposition which has been repeatedly shown by the candidate on whose claim I am now commenting. The Ashburton spirit is strong in him. As you have been told, his foot—if you send him into parliament as a member for the City of London—will be on the lowest round of that Jacob's ladder which rises up over the stages of knighthood or baronetcy, until it ascends to the third heaven of the peerage of this country. In his first address he speaks of being placed in the House of Commons to render service there to mercantile interests, "which have in this country a national importance." He speaks of them as something which has so grown up that it deserves to be noticed in a patronising manner; something which may be thought worthy of being at least recognised as an appendage to the higher ranks and gradations of society here—something which is to be condescendingly taken by the hand, and not that which, as

a citizen of London, he should have been most proud of —not that which has infused into the minds of men a spirit of independence and frankness, and which induced an answer some time ago, when, in a conference with royalty, the monarch threatened, as if it were utter destruction to the place, that he would remove himself and court from London, and a citizen respectfully replied: "I hope it will please your Majesty to leave the river Thames behind." Why, the city has bred up men who know their rights, and, "knowing, dare maintain" them; in whose honest and independent ranks we find a lustre that aristocracy never has bestowed, nor ever can; the appreciation of which should surely be marked in the man that aspires to be its representative, and who goes, not to wriggle his own way into other classes of society, but to tell all the other classes what are the wants, the wishes, and the rights of the great mercantile and middling classes that constitute the bulk of his constituency. In conformity with this general leaning of his mind, he pitches, I say, at once on the agricultural class, as that whose particular interest is to form an exception to the application of his own general views. How is it worked out? By nibbling in succession at sophisms which have been exploded until even the reiterations of the daily press have shrunk from their repetition. He looks at them wistfully, and says of each that it will not do; turns away to another, and finds that equally worthless; hints that, perhaps, the agriculture of the country may be protected into finding a sufficient supply of food, but is not sure; remarks that independence of foreign nations, if not a sound and valid argument—indeed, he does not say that it is—is still clung to by many as a most desirable condition of things; looks at the question of wages, and thinks that it may follow the price of food, but recollects that it is not so in America; and at last, endeavouring to make something of this argument, he pursues it from one stage to another, until it all comes to this—that he is very much afraid, were the Corn Laws repealed, that some agricultural labourers would be thrown out of work, and that the multitudes in Lancashire might be injured by their competition. It is, indeed, but a little mouse to be brought forth by such a mountain of an argument.

And then, how remarkable it is that Mr. Baring should

be in a difficulty about this, that he should not know what to do with his surplus agricultural labourers in such a position of things; that he should find nowhere to put them but in Lancashire, among the manufacturing operatives; because, if we turn to another part of his speech, we find that he has a remedy for the overwhelming population of this country. He is not embarrassed by the birth of a thousand infants every day; he has no difficulty in propounding for the entire population a plan of colonisation; he will transport the surplus population from the manufacturing districts, and yet, having so summarily disposed of those who would much rather stay here and earn their bread, he is yet involved in such a terrible difficulty about the minute portion of agricultural labourers thrown out of employment by the supposed agency of Free Trade, that for them he can find no other remedy but the sacrifice of Free-Trade principles. But then we have too much power, he says; and this is one of his arguments for supporting the present monopoly in food: "He would venture to say that, with their present machinery, the manufacturers of this country were in possession of a power of production quite equal to any demand that could be made upon us from any country which, under such circumstances, might furnish us with their corn." Now, if it is as he says, this must be a very wonderful power which does not employ, when it is set to work, more hands. I have heard of no machinery, however powerful, that would work without human superintendence; that having produced a certain quantity under the direction of the human mind, and with the application of human labour, would then go on to produce half as much more, and yet neither man, woman, nor child be wanted for the operation. But suppose it is so, what is his remedy? This power of production, which one might think among the best gifts of Heaven, while there are people to be fed and clothed, and the means of food and clothing are provided in such power,—what is his remedy for it? Keep it idle; practically annihilate it. We have too much power of production, which must not be exercised, because the landlords of this country do not produce food enough for those to purchase who would be enriched by this application of the machinery.

What a state of things, that an immense power of pro-

duction of the conveniences and luxuries of life should ever be thought a thing that requires repression, that should be coerced into inertness! Why, if this were carried out to its full extent, to what absurdities might it not lead us! If one machine be too powerful, it would make us use a less powerful one. The rule would be: "Do not produce more than the landlords require to be produced, in order that you may treat with them for the produce of their soil."

And if machinery is thus to be reduced in power, why not the human machine that works it? If men will labour so much—if they will have the power of earning bread from foreigners, and claim to have it when they have earned it—why, then, diminish that power; cut off their arms, and let them labour only within the reasonable limits which protection demands of them. We should be somewhat surprised if a traveller were to tell us that, in his wanderings over the face of the globe, he came into a country where all the working class had had two of their fingers amputated, and his surprise would be by no means diminished if some politician in the country—some representative of its metropolis, or would be so—were to tell him that the people had been guilty of over-production; that they laboured so much with those restless five fingers of theirs, that there was no bearing it; that the land of the country would not grow enough to satisfy them if they toiled so much; that, it being necessary to protect this landed interest, he had diminished their power by this amputation; and that this nation of "Three-fingered Jacks" was the noblest specimen that could be furnished of the wisdom of protection, and of the beauty of excluding abstract principles from regulating the commerce of the country. And what is Mr. Baring, after all? He cannot dismiss this part of the subject without telling us that, supposing the country wanted regularly an importation of foreign corn for the subsistence of the population, it would then become a question, nay, in his mind it would be more desirable, that there should be a fixed duty than a sliding scale, inasmuch as in the latter case there would be an artificial deluging of the country at a time when it was least needed, and a scarcity when it was most strongly felt. Now, who does not know that this is really the state of things; that for fifty years this has been an importing country; that the average want

of about 1,000,000 quarters has been felt, year after year, through a large portion of that time; that it can be marked out distinctly as a regular national want? Mr. Baring, accordingly, in meaning to support a sliding scale, does so in opposition to his own opinion in favour of a fixed duty; both the intention and the opinion being also in violation of his professed adhesion to the principles of Free Trade. And this man is supported by those whose whole power was, not long ago, put forth most energetically, in order to demolish an administration that had dared to propose a fixed duty.

I pass on from this to his next point of exception, which is on the ground of humanity. Now, if one's feelings of humanity come into competition with any sound principle, one may well hesitate, although it is a strange case to suppose. But what is this plea of humanity? Why, that the sugar of this country must be free from the taint of slavery. He feels so much for the negroes, that he will not allow slave-made sugar to come into this country; while those very negroes, for whose emancipation we have paid so amply, sweeten their own grog with the slave-made sugars that have been sent to this country from Brazil, to be refined and reëxported. Humanity, indeed! The feeling is not for the negroes. It is for the possessors of estates in the West Indies, which yield not a satisfactory profit to their owners. The negro does not want their sympathy in this way; he does not want to be bullied or flogged into a cane-field; he likes his present situation much better. Nay, we find complaints made that he has grown wealthy. We have been told that his wife wears silks, and that he rides in a gig, and is a "respectable" man; that he bids for the property on which he once toiled, and laughs to scorn the pretended humanity that would bring him down by competition practically to the condition of a slave. And this is the pretext, the shallow pretext, under which a system is kept up that actually stops the consumption of sugar in this country; that keeps it for years, notwithstanding the great increase of the population, precisely where it was, and thus invades the common comforts of life, and inflicts a privation that must be severely felt by the poorest classes.

Through all these exceptions, we find one spirit and principle reigning. Tear off the mask from each, and you find the foul and disgusting feature of monopoly under-

neath. Shipping monopoly, corn monopoly, sugar monopoly,—there they are, veiled as defence, veiled as revenue, veiled as humanity, but all meaning the same thing, all meaning the enrichment of small classes at the expense of the toiling and the industry of the larger. And is it to support such a system as this that we are invited to blink our own principles as Mr. Baring disregards his? Is it to support such anomalies, such absurdities, such oppressions and injuries, that we are to turn away from the man who will work out his principles, and give our votes to one who practically confesses that his whole political conduct is an exception to—I should say more properly a violation of—the principles he professes to hold as just and true? I am not one of those who have their homes in Lancashire, a residence which seems to bear something of offence upon it in certain quarters; but I would much rather be identified with any class, whatever their abode, that makes the just and noble appeal that has been made to the citizens of London by these denizens of Lancashire, than I would with a class who shall, if it be a supposable case, disregard that appeal, and give their votes in favour of monopoly and against their fellow-countrymen. What matters it where they come from? Is London grown so narrow and restricted that it has no citizenship to spare for those whose generous efforts in behalf of the laborious and oppressed should make them free of any city, however proud its community? I had thought better of London before this declaration was put forth; I had imagined that if there were men who could point out the path of improvement, who could lay their hand on a law, and say this is bad, wrong in principle, and injurious in operation, and ought to be repealed,—that when they could say, such is the course by which commerce may be extended, labour more amply rewarded, and industry more sufficiently encouraged—I should have supposed that the home of such men, their natural abode, should have been in London. I had supposed that when there was an appeal to be made against the infliction of wrong, that when the cry of justice was to be raised, that when the favouring spirit of public opinion, manifested by the daily organs of the press, or by the voices of assembled multitudes, was to be looked for, that those who sought such things, and entertained such objects, would be

sure of finding their homes in London. Such, I trust, will London be, and not a cistern for the foul toads of monopoly to thrive and gender in.

The feeling of the people with these men of Lancashire has crowned their heretofore honourable labours; and it now will, I trust, add a more brilliant victory than any which they have yet achieved as preparatory to the great final triumph. In our response to the appeal from the free-traders of Lancashire, I feel that their home is wherever the principles of truth and justice can prevail. They are not for abstract justice merely—the meaning of which I take to be simply an abstraction of justice from the people; and wherever knowledge penetrates—wherever the multitudinous tracts which they put forth find their way to men's intellects and hearts—wherever, by the growth of information, sound principles are generated, and the progress of social improvement is advanced,—there the League has its home; wherever there is hard endurance of imperfectly remunerated toil—wherever the artisan in the populous city has to grieve over the pittance which is all that he has to bestow on his family—or, in remoter districts, wherever the agricultural labourer looks around on the tattered vestments of his wife and children, and feels that they cannot even appear decently at church to receive the ordinances of their religion,—there is the home of the League, to inspire despondency itself with hope, and to give the prospect of relief. Wherever in distant regions nature's fertility runs to waste—where, for want of a demand for the power of human labour, ingenuity is not put forth, but the soil is doomed to artificial barrenness through the power of monopoly in this country, preventing the interchange of that which the cultivator would gladly make—there, too, is the home of the League, bringing the promise of richer harvests; there to clothe the distant cultivator, and to feed the artisan. And wherever, on all future occasions, the battle of principles is to be fought in the electoral contests —wherever monopoly may raise its head, and make its last expiring efforts against Free Trade—there will be the home of the League, to see fair play, to encourage the timid, and to cheer on the candidate who shall honestly advocate those measures which shall insure food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, and give life, spirit, and power to all classes of

society, and thereby show that this country has yet to run its career of prosperity and glory. And I trust that the result of this election will be to show that where there is a legislature having in its hands the destinies of a great empire, there likewise will be the home of the League, proving that justice—no longer an abstraction—justice to all classes, from the highest to the lowest—is the surest guidance of legislative enactments, as it is the amplest source of national prosperity.

No. IV.

AT ROCHDALE.

November 25th, 1843.

MR. CHAIRMAN, ladies, and gentlemen, I feel very strongly the truth and propriety of the observation just made by Mr. Cobden, that we are not assembled here to argue the question of the Corn Laws. The arguments against these laws are scattered all over the country, and are concentrated in every town. These arguments exist in the sufferings of the distressed—in the accumulated wretchedness and pauperism of a large portion of our fellow-countrymen—in the feelings of the humane and benevolent—in the principles of the clear-headed, and in the determination of patriotic men that this monster shall no longer be endured. How can the question be argued, when there is nothing to answer—when one sophism after another has been exposed and exploded—when the whole series of vicious reasoning has been run round and round, and the advocates of monopoly, beaten out of one position, take up another; and so, in their everlasting round, until there is no place of rest for them whatever that has not been previously occupied—that has not been shown to be in a position where they can establish no power, and on which they can build up no demonstration?

The Corn Laws are not now a fallacy to be disproved, but a nuisance to be abated. It is not a time to argue; it is the time for feeling and exertion. We cannot stop—we should not stop to discuss the theory of storms, if we were in a ship, and in danger of immediately going to the bottom; the worst of all seasons for inquiring into the natural history of serpents would be when a man found himself within the folds of a boa constrictor. The question is, not how to debate, but it is how to get rid of this practical falsehood from the land, how to put down this wickedness and abomination. I am not to bring arguments to you—the arguments are best which I find here; I find

them in your earnestness, I find them in your sympathy, I find them in your zeal. The arguments against the Corn Laws and the predictions of their termination are not in words, but in men and facts. Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright are arguments against the Corn Laws by which they will be disproved. Manchester and Rochdale are other arguments by which they are backed, completing the demonstration. In fact, it is reduced to a mere question of arithmetic, which the ladies who devote their attention to the cultivation of young minds in infant-schools will speedily be able to teach them, and may be worked out in their elementary lessons, and the question may be thus stated: "Mr. Cobden plus Mr. Bright, and the manufacturers of Manchester plus the manufacturers of Rochdale, are equal to the abolition of the Corn Laws."

The best arguments are those which are distinguished by the abbreviations of £. *s. d.* And especially is this the case since that which has generally been the root of all wickedness has, by the zeal of the noble leaders of the League, been made the root of righteousness; and money, so often used for the purposes of popular debasement and degradation—money, so often boasted of as the power that turned the tide of elections, and that commanded the most solemn expression of public opinion in the return of representatives to Parliament—has been made by them the means of multiplying knowledge; of kindling the light of intelligence; of giving principle its power, honesty its weight; and of making the interests and the determination of the country have their representatives, too, in its legislative councils, and dealt with first in the enactments of parliament. The whole sum and substance of what is ever said now in defence of the Corn Laws is in the cuckoo repetition of the two words. As the advocates of monopoly are looking to the chance of holding on a little longer, or to the prospect of a speedy compromise, it is either for protection or revenue—protection, a word misapplied in the most extraordinary sense as it is used in connection with this subject. Protection! protection of what? It is a term we are accustomed, in truth and justice and humanity, to apply to the extending of the arm of the strong over the weak; it is that by which we denote the administration of justice when it asserts the rights of the needy and confronts the

rapacity of the oppressor; but in the lexicon of monopoly, "protection" means the defence, not of the weak, but of the powerful—the protection, not of those who live in cottages, but of those who dwell in mansions or palaces; the protection, not of those who can scarcely obtain food to eat, but of those who revel in every luxury; protection, not for the penniless farm-labourer, but for the proprietors of broad acres. As for those who should be the objects of protection, they get, indeed, just such protection as the vulture gives to the lamb. The lower class of the agricultural community, where have they been protected? Where, when they could not escape from their own districts to those where manufactures would promise them some employment, but must fly to that saddest place to which living wretchedness could be led—the union workhouse? They have been protected into rags; they have been protected from wheaten bread and meat down to potatoes; they have been protected from a condition in which they could see their way in life to one in which there is the direst prospect before them; they have been degraded into ignorance both morally and intellectually; they have been degraded into brutality, and too often into vice; they have been protected through different stages of suffering, until at last this boasted carefulness for them ends in protecting them to that narrow house "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

And in all this jealousy of the foreigner, this protection from his interference, and of the poor and those who toil from being fed with the corn which he is ready to exchange for the products of their labour, why have the very authors of the law—sufficient as they must be for their own protection, seeing that they not only have the command of both houses of the legislature, but that they have also at their back that mighty Church over which their patronage extends so largely; seeing that the army, and the navy, and the legal institutions of the country, are all open to their ambition, and tend in various ways to swell their emoluments—why have they not protected themselves, if there be any honesty at all in their plea of nationality, and pretence of thinking that every thing—so far, at least, as regards the poorer classes—should be so perfectly English? Why, on a recent occasion, the dress

of one of them was analysed: the beaver hat on his head was French; the leather in his boots was French; the figured-satin vest was French; and even the very cambric handkerchief which he carried in his pocket was French, —until he was shown to depend upon the foreigner physically from head to foot. Now, we might follow up that view to the general consideration of his habits and modes of living and of thought. Where, then, is the wealthy landowner of this country really independent of the foreigner? Take him from head to foot:* to-day he has a French cook to dress his dinner for him, and a Swiss valet to dress him for his dinner; he hands his lady to it, her modest blushes concealed beneath a veil of Brussels lace, French gloves on her hands, and an ostrich-plume waving over her head which never grew in an English poultry-yard. His wines are from the Rhine or the Rhone; his galleries are rich in paintings from Italy, or in statuary from Greece; his favourite horses are distinguished for their Arabian blood, and his favourite dogs are of St. Bernard's breed. His education is from Greece and Rome, and even his religion itself from Palestine; the very fields from which he enjoys his revenue are now manured from guano as un-English; and at last, if he rises to judicial honours, he carries on his shoulders that honoured ermine which never before was on the back of an English beast; and when he is worn out with warning us against the foreigner—as in his cradle he played with a coral from the Oriental ocean—the sculpture that adorns his tomb is beautiful in marble from the quarries of Carrara.

I find no fault with him for realising all the amount of enjoyment and intelligence and refinement which can be gathered from the remotest regions of the earth; I believe that Providence has diversified the productions of different climates and the sections of mankind in order that they might minister to each other in those things, and that the good of all should become the good of each. What I complain of is this: that being thus foreign, both physically and mentally, moreover, being altogether a foreign product

* It was very rare for Mr. Fox to repeat an illustration; but he elaborated this passage, and introduced it in a subsequent speech with such remarkable effect, that it was extensively copied by the press, and translated into all the principal languages of Europe.

himself in the very heart of England, he should have that nicety of feeling as to be afraid lest foreign bread should find its way into the mouth of the honest labourer. From that gross inconsistency, from that hypocrisy, from that gross injury to his fellow-creatures, and from his preposterous pretext, I would gladly afford him and his whole class the most complete protection that could be demanded. But what is really, after all, the object of this protection; this cry, as it is always called, of the "agricultural interest"? It is not raised on behalf of the poor farm-labourer. It is not really raised on behalf of the tenant-farmers either.

I looked the other day to an analysis of the outgoings and incomings of a farmer, as stated by a clerical secretary to an agricultural society; from which it appeared that, on a farm of three hundred acres, the tenant was represented to have sustained a loss of upwards of 200*l.* Such a loss is a hard thing for a man who toils and brings skill and industry to his work, and on whom others are dependent, and in whose well-being he is deeply interested. But, on looking more closely to the item, I find that the tenant, who finds all the skill and capital and industry, sustains a loss of upwards of 200*l.*; while there is put down among his payments rent to the amount of 400 guineas, which has been duly paid to his landlord. And this—qualified persons of their own order being witnesses—this is the great object of legislative protection, and of the food monopoly! We are teaching no new doctrine in this. Nearly a quarter of a century ago, a great poet of this country—knowing well the class to which he belonged—thus described the motives by which they were then actuated, in their support of a former Corn Bill, preparatory to that under which the country suffered so long. Byron speaks thus of the landowners of 1821:

"*Their* ploughshare was the sword in hireling hands,
Their fields manured by gore of other lands.
Safe in their barns, these Sabine tillers sent
Their brethren out to battle—why? for rent.
Year after year they voted cent per cent,
Blood, sweat, and tear-wrung millions—why? for rent.
They roared, they dined, they drank, they swore they meant
To die for England; why then live?—for rent!

The peace has made one general malcontent
Of these high-market patriots—war was rent!
Their love of country, millions all misspent,
How reconcile?—by reconciling rent!
And will they not repay the treasures lent?
No; down with every thing, and up with rent!
Their good, ill, health, wealth, joy, or discontent,
Being, end, aim, religion—rent! rent! rent!"

No. V.

AT THE FREE-TRADE HALL, MANCHESTER.

December 14th, 1843.

I REJOICE to find myself face to face with you, the men of Manchester, in your Free-Trade Hall—in this capacious cradle of the Anti-Corn-Law League, where has been cherished that young Hercules, that already grasps by the throat with one hand the serpent of Monopoly, and with the other that of Electoral Corruption. I am glad to find myself here with you, in whose zeal that League originated, by whose munificent contributions it has been supplied, and by whose coöperative multitudes it has been supported; amongst you who have sent forth men that are teaching the country, and the rulers of the country, this great lesson,—that as Napoleon failed to subdue England through commercial restrictions abroad, the conqueror of Napoleon shall fail to govern England through commercial restrictions at home. I am glad to see those who have sent forth through the length and breadth of the country the men who, if they may not yet be said

> "The applause of listening senates to command,"

are in a way for accomplishing a much greater object than the applause of any senate; and as they march onward to the accomplishment of their great purpose,

> "Will scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
> And read their history in a nation's eyes."

Full of anxiety for the success of this cause, to their devotedness of spirit, backed by your cheering aid, what will not the country owe? and how proud should all be who, like myself, are thus privileged to come among you, to acknowledge the obligations which throughout the land we feel to them,—feel to many on whose merits I will not dwell, because they are here around me,—feel towards one of whom I may speak because he is not present—your able, your eminent, your devoted townsman—that man to

whom all who are interested in the cause of Free Trade look as to one who is destined to achieve its triumph; who, while conciliating different classes, has never sunk into a trimmer; whom the applause of multitudes has never inflated into a demagogue; and whom the malaria of St. Stephen's has never paled into conventionalism. By his straightforward simplicity of fact and argument he has baffled the tactics and the efforts of the most veteran sophists; by his obvious integrity he has conciliated the spirit of all honest men; and when the work shall be done, when the future historians of our country shall record the conflict and the triumph, then, with a eulogy that will give him place above the statesman, and far above the warrior, will they, in their most flowing language, record the efforts, the exertions, and the achievements of RICHARD COBDEN.

To him, in conjunction with his worthy fellow-labourers, is owing that which I regard as one of the greatest blessings of the Anti-Corn-Law League—indirect, indeed, but not unworthy of being compared with its direct effect; I mean, that when the reform for which you strive shall be accomplished,—when the victory of the League is gained, and its labours are over,—when the League may have ceased to be in existence,—it will live beyond all these, the surety and the pledge of all other desirable reforms; it will leave ample materials of future good for our country, in the knowledge it has diffused; in the intelligence it has stimulated; in the integrity it has cherished; in the independence of spirit which it will have fostered and matured; in the large views of other interests to which it will have expanded man's thoughts; in the brotherhood of feeling that it will have generated between classes too often hostile to each other, and between nations too often engaged in sanguinary warfare; and thus, strong in the moral elements of future good, these reforms will be the pledge, the germ of a thousand reforms, raising our country to a noble elevation, and endowing England with what her great poet calls her ancient privilege and prerogative of "teaching nations how to live."

That you are moving onward to certain success every new event is the presage. The prospects of victory seem to redouble upon us as we look around. I find them one day, in the accession of illustrious names; another day, in

the zeal of countless multitudes; now, in the enthusiastic meetings which are held in towns; now, in meetings affording a like prospect of success and usefulness that are held in agricultural districts. We see success in the elections you win; we see it also in the elections you lose—lose, polling votes more numerous than gained former elections in the same town; and showing to monopoly that, inch by inch, its dominion will be contested, that no quarter will be given, till its nefarious domination is everlastingly abolished. But while this process is going on, we cannot but remark, with deep anxiety and with acute suffering, that the evils which you would remedy continue from year to year, producing most fearful and heart-rending results. Notwithstanding every effort, still the powers of mischief are afoot; industry is languishing throughout the country, and the occasional gleams—transient gleams—of restored occupation to the industrious artisan, do but serve to make more visible the darkness across which they flash; they do but illustrate the fact, that in cheapness of food, and in that alone, can the people of this country find security that industry will thrive, and will meet with its due recompense; that all the various sources of human existence and well-being will continue to flow on in their fertilising streams.

Why, there are cases in which monopolists are obliged to adopt the arguments of the League. As soon as they begin to reason, they play your game; they have no winning card which they do not take from your pack. About a week ago, the great landowners of Norfolk met to consult about the formation of a railway to London, to connect them at once with the metropolis and with the northern counties. And what were the arguments used at this meeting? Why, that all railways had, in all cases, enhanced the value of land; that they could not be cut off from the metropolitan market; that without a railway their traffic would be completely isolated; that they should imitate those who slaughtered their cattle and sent them to London by the trains, as is said to be done by the large northern counties; for, said they, the manufacturing districts are the best contractors for our coarse beef. Now, the minds of these men must be coarser than their beef, if they are not content to remain isolated in their county,

while, at the same time, they tell the people that they should be isolated from all the world. Why, traffic is what they are representing to be the great desideratum for England. It is independence of the foreigner; it is independence of the counties; it is independence of the metropolis: and what is the result of this independence? But they say, "We must have greater facilities of intercommunication." They say, "We must have more trade for our productions; we must have a railway, and get into livelier competition with the landowners of other counties." That which is good for them is surely good for you also; for if the manufacturer is to be restricted, what is he but the mere tool and agent, the workman, of this class? He toils in that case for the British landowner, and for him alone. And what scope is there? There are thirty thousand landowners in this country, and one or two of your great establishments would give to them all the productions which they deign to wear, and accumulate a surplus which can only be useful for exchange with the foreigner.

It is by industry that England has been made, not by Norman conquerors,—not by feudal barons,—not by an aristocracy of any description of wealth or title. It has been made by that slow but unfailing process, upon which generation after generation has applied its powers of mind and invention and physical endurance to realising the good which the earth gives out, and to which the different materials that can be brought from the remotest regions can be applied. War-horses do not create lands; but the coral polyps from generation to generation raise them up from the depths of the ocean; the land appears, the sun shines, the dews descend, seeds spring up, and there at length is life, and joy, and industry, and happiness. However this land of ours was formed,—whether by such slow labours, or by some volcanic eruption,

> "Britain first at Heaven's command
> Arose from out the azure main,"—

still the lesson which is thus taught us has this moral importance, that in the League there is a power, like that of the central fire of which geologists tell us, that raises up the lowest formations to endow them with the capability of exhibiting all the powers of life and animation.

The great masses of the people of this country also may have been from generation to generation only slowly accumulating their capabilities and their powers, forming like the strata that are being deposited in the great bed of the ocean, exposed to the agencies of fire and water until the time comes when they are heaved above the waters. Thus, by the power of association and gradual elevation, the industrial classes arise into magnitude and strength. Though the billows of oppression shall have rolled over them for ages, thus shall they be borne to the surface of things, and take their position among the world's realities, and bear their harvests of truth and goodness and enjoyment.

If industry languishes, even while these efforts are put forth for the emancipation of industry, can it be said that agriculture thrives? It has had its nursing-fathers and its nursing-mothers. King George III. was a great farmer, whatever he might be as a sovereign. He is said to have been the author of several articles which appeared in the *Farmers' Magazine;* articles which were published anonymously, but which are quite as good as many royal speeches that have been delivered; and in his time there was a board of agriculture which was to rival the Highland Society of Scotland; it lived twenty-five years, during every one of which years it had a parliamentary grant for its support; at length the grant was withdrawn, and the board perished. The landowners thought it better to rely on the legislative board, which they made subservient to their purposes of "protection," for improvements; and only in the years 1838 and 1839 did the founder of the Agricultural Society declare that agriculture was then quite in its infancy. Since that time, we find that this society is spending 5000*l.* a year in premiums for inventions of improved machinery for agricultural purposes, and in holding great public meetings; and it has boasted from time to time that now agriculture is showing symptoms of taking rank as a science and an art; that at the last agricultural exhibition there were 290 more inventions than had been exhibited at the preceding one; and that a prospect was opening for them of indefinite improvement.

Who has done all this? 1838 and 1839? Why, they are the years of the birth of the League, as well as of the

Royal Agricultural Society. We find here symptoms of action and reaction; those who depend upon protection are not likely to cherish internal improvements; and now that you have driven them upon the other tack, let us hope they will learn where their reliance is, and turn the land to its legitimate purposes; for certain it is, after all that has been said about the growing of corn, it is not for the growing of corn merely that the landowner looks to his estate. He values it for the growing of other things of a very different kind. The land grows political influence,—it grows votes, large crops of them; it grows places and pensions; it grows peerages, and stars and garters, and mitres; and, above all, it has grown that horrible upas-tree of monopoly, more pestilential than the famous poison-tree of Java, whose atmosphere restricts all communication from a distance, under whose boughs no justice is ever administered, and where lie around the whitening and rotting carcasses of those who have perished under its malignant influence.

No. VI.

AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE.

January 25th, 1844.

I HAVE to address you on the first meeting of a new year of agitation, at a time when confusion, anxiety, and uncertainty are prevailing throughout the country,—when the legislature is expected shortly to meet,—when the people look on rather with sullen expectancy than with any degree of hopefulness,—when the League has gone on marshalling its strength, augmenting its funds, and multiplying its numbers,—when political parties are on the look-out to see what chance may turn up for retaining their position, or for getting into the position of their adversaries,—when *Anti-League* Associations are forming in different counties, —and when, therefore, it is appropriate and desirable to reiterate, though in terms that have been often heard, but which cannot be too frequently repeated—to reiterate the League principle—the one aim and object of this association, that for which we are banded together—without which we will never be content; till we attain which our organisation and exertions will continue—the one broad, simple principle of Free Trade; and, as applied to the greatest practical case, the total, the immediate, and the unconditional abolition of the Corn Laws.

That is the star by which we steer; to that single point we bear right on, heedless of all other considerations. We care not for parties; we care not for demarcations of faction, new or old; we care not for the consistencies or inconsistencies of this or that leader of any portion of the House of Commons—the total, the unconditional, and the immediate abolition of the Corn Laws is what we ask, and all we ask. We require no more, we will take no less, from Sir Robert Peel on the one side, or Lord John Russell on the other. We ask no more, and we will take no less, from Lord Melbourne on the one side, and the Duke of Wellington on the other—or from my Lord Brougham on all sides. We wage no further warfare with those who con-

cede this principle; we wage everlasting warfare with all who will not grant it; and because it *is* a principle, in our own minds it admits of no compromise whatever. That is our watchword. If a certain class in the country reiterates the cry, "No surrender," we reply by "No compromise." If this movement were what it has been sometimes mistakenly represented,—if it were a mere manufacturers' combination,—if it endeavoured to put certain portions of the trade and commerce of this country on a different, a safer, and more profitable footing, and this were all,—if this were a mere party movement, an action of hostility towards one set of politicians, and an endeavour to introduce into their place another set of politicians,—if this movement were a class feeling,—if we really did the absurd thing that has been ascribed to us in the published resolutions of societies, —if we hated agriculture—an inconceivable absurdity! for how can any man hate that without which he gets no bread to eat?—or if this were a mere popular or a mere cuckoo cry, set up by individuals for their own personal aggrandisement, or for political ends, like "No Popery," and similar cries that have so often led multitudes astray, and wrought confusion in the country, why then there might be compromise in the matter. But we say it is "the very stuff o' the conscience;" it is a principle upon which we have made up our minds as embracing the right of man anterior to the existence of civilised society; for if any thing can be called a natural right, it is that of man's exchanging the produce of his honest labour freely in the world's markets for whatever he may desire which may be most welcome to him, ministering to his existence or enjoyment.

This is not a question that admits of degrees; it is not a thing to be settled piecemeal. We respect all rights; but we have no respect for wrongs. We understand not the doctrine of tolerating a certain portion of robbery, iniquity, and oppression upon the community, and on individuals. We take up our position on the *right* and the *wrong* of the case—for property of all sorts, as realised by human skill and labour, and as sanctioned by human laws and institutions. We avow our respect for, and we hold in sacred veneration, the property of the class which has most opposed itself to our claims: the broad acres of the landowner are his; we mean not to touch them—we set up no scramble for

their division. We interfere not with his regulation of that which, by inheritance or by purchase, belongs to him. Let him do as he will with his own; he is amenable to opinion if he violates decency and morality; but so far as he keeps within the limits which the great objects of human society prescribe, we respect his rights even there. Let him have his game, or let him decimate his hares and rabbits; let him grant leases or refuse them; let him cut down the ancient timber on his estate to put cash into his pocket, or let him have a great respect for, and be conservative of, timber and institutions. We meddle with nothing whatever of this; let him have his whole rights. The land is his; the produce of the land is his, or theirs to whom he hires out that land; but there is one thing which is not his, and that is, the industry of other people, their labour, their skill, their perseverance, their bones and sinews, their daily toil; and the bread which they earn by that toil and work he has no right to diminish by taxation. They are his fellow-countrymen, and not his slaves.

The labourer's bones and muscles are his own property, and not the landlord's. We claim for ourselves that which we concede to him—the fair produce of whatever power, privileges, or advantages we possess. Here our principle claims the same respect, the same sacred veneration, for the rights of property of the man who has nothing in the world but the physical strength with which he goes forth in the morning to earn his dinner at noon, and that of the inheritor of the widest and most princely domain which can be boasted of in this country of Great Britain. And in our regard for this principle, we are opposed, not only to the protectionist form of invasion of the industrious man's property, but to any other mode or plan of invasion of that property which might be substituted by any other parties or for any other purpose. Our principle is as opposed to a fixed duty as it is opposed to a sliding scale. The one is as much an invasion of the common rights of the people as is the other; for what is its tendency, under whatever pretext it can be levied? There is no doubt that any duty on the importation of corn must enhance the price of food; and whatever enhances the price of food takes away from the fair earnings of the industrious.

When we call to mind the condition of great multitudes

of the industrious classes—when we think how they rise early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness—by what miserable and wearing toil their poor pittance is won from the world—when we remember how many there are the whole history of whose lives is summed up in the well-known verse—

> "Work, work, work,
> Till the eyes be red and dim;
> Work, work, work,
> Till the brain begins to swim,"—

when we look on such a destiny as this, if a fixed duty would take but a farthing out of the pound, we say it should not be taken off their pittance to augment the stores of the Dukes of Buckingham and Richmond, or any other landlord. Why, there are cases in which the imposition of a fixed duty on corn, whatever the amount, would lead to more objectionable results, perhaps, than those which belong to the sliding scale.

It has been often urged, and I believe it has been felt as an objection, "What will you do with your fixed duty, your 10*s*., your 8*s*., or your 5*s*.,—what will you do with it when the price of food rises, as at times it does rise, to a famine price?" And it has been replied, Then it must be relaxed. And what power shall determine the relaxation, and by what test? Only realise in your imagination, for a moment, the condition of a prime minister who has to watch the country to see whether the time is come, or coming, at which the fixed duty on corn must be relaxed by a special interposition of the government, because food is reaching a famine price! He must note in the papers how many are picked up fainting in the streets from want of food; how many cases of starvation will prove that bread has risen to the price at which the relaxation must take place; what amount of disease, how much typhus, will be a justification of the relaxation of that duty? These are the inquiries a prime minister must make in such a case. He must watch the country, and feel its pulsation, as the regimental surgeon stands by when a soldier is flogged—finger on wrist, eye on the bleeding wound, ear upon the sound of the cat on the bare back, with a stop-watch noting whether the instant has yet arrived when he is to interpose and say, "Hold, enough!"

Is this a fitting position for the chief of the legitimate government of a free nation?

One violation of justice always leads to another. Forget justice, and charity will not long be remembered, and humanity cry in vain. A fixed duty! It is only protection under another name. That which is called "protection" —and "protection" is the very thing against which this League wages warfare, and which it exists in order to put down and annihilate for ever—we have no more charity for protection in this form than in another. What is it? "The protection of agriculture." What portion of agriculture? What class of persons? Strip it of devices and sophisms and circumlocutions, it is the protection of rent, and nothing else. The protection of the farmer! The tenant-farmer! has it ever enriched him? The protection of the labourer! what has been his history for many a year past? He has been protected downwards from one stage to another of descent; protected out of his old clothes into rags; protected out of his cottage into a ruined hovel, with but one filthy room in it for wife and family all to pig together. He has been protected till his wife and children are so ragged that they cannot go to church for the rites of religion. He is protected out of the field into the union workhouse, or perhaps into a court of justice, or a gaol; and at last he is protected into that narrow home,

> "Where the wicked cease from troubling,
> And the weary are at rest;"—

finding in the cold shelter of the grave more reality of protection than he ever got from the Corn Laws.

Protection! Why, what should we protect? Not a losing trade, for that is taxing all the community for the advantage of a class; that is pursuing an object that cannot repay the labourer. Not a thriving trade, for that needs no protection. And why should any one class be singled out? What is there in the condition of the recipient of rents that he is to be protected at the expense of all the rest of the community? Why not protect the philosopher, the artist, the poet? What can protection do for them, or for any thing that is intrinsically valuable? There was a poet born this day—some Scotchmen here will immediately remember to whom I refer, for many are

engaged elsewhere in celebrating the birthday of Robert Burns. Nature made Burns a poet, and aristocratic protection made him an exciseman. But the protection he most desired was that which his own stout heart and strong arm could give him. He was a man who would not humble himself in the dust before an aristocrat. He could adopt such language as this in reference to servility,—

> "For me, sae low I need nae bow,
> For the Lord be thankit I can plough;
> When I downa yoke a naig,
> Then, Lord be thankit, I can beg."

And the independence of the beggar was with him, and is, in reality, a more desirable thing than that pecuniary independence which is obtained by plundering others of their rights and their means of subsistence. It was justly said by an honourable gentleman who preceded me—If it be considered as a question of *revenue*, what is there in the world from which a revenue ought not sooner to be derived than from human food? Tax any thing but that! But revenue is a mere pretext in the case. In fact, the operation of these laws is full of petty juggling: some saying "revenue" when they mean "protection," others saying "protection" when they mean "revenue."

Sir Robert Peel contrived, in the first year of his tariff, to realise a duty of eight shillings a quarter on corn—three shillings a quarter more than it had ever before brought to the country. Those who are crying out that this is a question of revenue are only leading us by a roundabout way towards the same object—the putting money into the pockets of a class derived from the earnings of the rest of the community. But it is not the less an invasion of their rights, though the circuitousness of the method obscures and mystifies the process. They draw it silently and unobservedly, as they think, on account of this roundabout way of getting at it. But, after all, there it is! They are like the dishonest churchwarden. I did not mean ——; there have been more dishonest churchwardens in the world than one, however unenviable the preëminence that *he* has obtained. My allusion was to the old story of the churchwarden who carried round the plate for the sacrament money for the poor, and who, upon such occasions,

always took care to put sawdust in his pockets, that a few shillings might drop in without jingling. The Corn Laws are the landowners' sawdust; but the money goes not in a less quantity because its abstraction is more noiseless in the way of robbery by Act of Parliament than in any other irregular abstraction of property. With such men and such dealings as these we make no compromise.

Indeed, why should the League compromise now? "Compromise" is not exactly the word that belongs to our present position. If we dreamed not of it when we were weak, we are not likely to listen to it now that we are strong; if it was not our word when we were but few, it is little likely to be so now we are many. Allow me to say, that you in London scarcely imagine at present what the strength of the League is. It would be worth your while to send a deputation down into the North, there to mark and observe the nature of that strength; its progressiveness and its intensity. You should see the multitudes flocking together in those districts, men, women, and children, persons of all ranks and classes, as to a work that called forth the deepest sympathies of human nature. Yes, you should see them coming and mingling together in the same assembly—masters and men pouring out from the same factories. There is no heed paid there to the calumnies and stories which are circulated in some quarters; there are no symptoms there of the tyranny which has been talked of elsewhere. Whether it exists in other cases I know not; it certainly does not in the towns I have visited, and where I have seen this question agitated; but there come the operatives from the factories, not choked with "devil's dust," as Mr. Ferrand says, but ready to "down with their own *dust*" in the cause; contributing, and that largely; women bringing their portion, and showing that they feel that it is indeed a woman's part to help the helpless, to sympathise with the oppressed, to relieve the struggling; old and young combining, the very children feeling, as it were, an atmosphere of patriotic exertion, and having a presentiment that in times to come, when the victory of Free Trade shall be gained, and men will look back upon it as a matter of history and glorious achievement, that they, too, will have pride in saying, "I, also, was a repealer in my infancy!" Could you see the spirit with which they

are animated, the enthusiasm that pervades their meetings, you would feel that indeed the death-doom of monopoly was sealed; and whenever London shall take its proper position, when the feeling in the provinces shall be proportionately responded to here, when you meet with their religious principle in this matter, when you meet with their pecuniary liberality in this great cause, when you are animated with this firm determination, why, then the work *is* accomplished, and these Laws will be totally and finally abolished.

Not but that compromise would be as remote from the thoughts of the leaders of the League if they were alone in this great struggle. This was manifest from the spirit of the seven men at the meeting in Manchester several years ago, when they banded themselves for this purpose. Their principle from the beginning was, complete abolition and repeal, and nothing short of repeal; and I believe that they and others would have adhered to it, although no public sympathy had been aroused—though none of these great meetings had been held to cheer them on in their course; for when once a principle like this gets possession of the soul of man, it is indomitable. It is the fight of martyrdom and of victory! There may be victims, there cannot be defeat; there may be delay, but there cannot be eventual repulse. It is to individual devotion—to the determination never to compromise a principle—that we owe most of the world's great blessings. Without it we should have had no political freedom, no Protestant Reformation, no Christian religion!

Could the League falter in its course now—a thing which I hold to be morally impossible—it would still not signify in the great cause; for the leaders in such a cause as this, could they prove traitors, cannot stop the movement; they are but foremost in the ranks; they are marching on "regular as rolling water;" and if they will not themselves keep in advance, why, they will only be trampled under foot in the progress of the country towards the great consummation. I say again, "No compromise;" because we are challenged, we are summoned to the conflict. The landowners of England are throwing down the gauntlet; they are going to wage warfare with the League, and they say they will put down the League. We will try that

question with them. They are not the bold barons of Runnymede; the age of chivalry is gone; and most of all it is gone in their ranks, for there is little chivalry in becoming traders in corn, and taxing the country to enhance their profits.

But what do these people mean by a course which tends to isolate them from every other class of the community? Suspicion in their tenants; hatred and insubordination in their labourers; an interest against which they wage war in the other great classes in the empire; repudiating, not their debts, but their diamonds; rejecting from their ranks such men as the Spencers, the Westminsters, the Ducies, and the Radnors; disrobing themselves of what should constitute their dignity and their armour. And what do they mean, I say, by standing aloof from the world, and dreaming that they are strong enough to trample under foot its inhabitants, and to reap its plunder? Nothing can await them but discomfiture and confusion. They must soon feel that their state, the more they persist in such a course, is one of insecurity and apprehension; they will feel the ground tremble under them, as it is said to have shaken wherever the fratricide Cain set his foot; and ramble where they will, no sympathy will cheer their course, no kind and gushing feeling will welcome their arrival: their real interest is, then, to reunite themselves with the nation, in conjunction with which they may have respect, wealth, and happiness; in warfare with which, they can only bring on the destruction of their class.

As to these meetings of the tenantry—ordered to come, as they seem to be in some cases, and declining to come, as they evidently do in others—the deception and exaggeration of their numbers and their contributions have already been mentioned to you. I have no doubt that large exaggerations do take place wherever a numerous meeting is reported; and would the *Morning Herald* favour us, as it sometimes obliges the government, with the private notes of its reporters, we should then know something more of the real state of the case. I have seen but one account—and that in a local paper—of a genuine meeting of tenant-farmers, placed beyond suspicion as to the class of persons and the freedom of their discussion. That was a meeting which lately took place at Evesham of the tenant-farmers,

members of the Agricultural Society of the Vale of Evesham. About twenty-five of them met together to discuss the subject of leases; and after fairly and fully hearing both sides of the question from two of their number, who had studied the subject and were opposed in opinion, they came to two divisions: one division was on the desirableness of leases, on which twenty voted for it and two against it; the other was on the subject of corn-rents, where there were eighteen for and three against. And such will be the result of these County Protection Associations, if the farmers are allowed fair play. Meanwhile, from their number, it is a pity they do not seek an aggregate meeting. I think, inconvenient as this place is for your number, they might perhaps be accommodated here, and Mr. Paulton could find a private box for the Protection Society of each county. The conscientious friends of the present sliding scale, and of Sir Robert Peel, might, perhaps, all be accommodated in the manager's box, and then when their discussion was done they might join in yours, and compare notes with you on the great question at issue.

But it will never avail for the landlords to attempt to drive the farmers to such meetings in the same manner as they drive them to the poll at elections—there is more required; and it is difficult to make persons in their present doubting, inquiring, and perhaps suspicious and sullen state of mind, go through the manual exercise which their chairman may desire. I understand that at one of these meetings, when a resolution was to be passed, the chairman had great difficulty in getting a show of hands; he had to tell the farmers, over and over again, that *now* they were to hold up their hands; but the farmers, by perhaps a voluntary blunder, instead of holding up their hands, turned up their noses. On the argumentation at these meetings I shall make no remark; for out of nothing, nothing can come. They have been generally a sheer tissue of abuse; and the only fragments or grains that are to be found in these bushels of chaff are the old iterations of fallacies which every labourer can detect, of wages rising with the price of corn, of the need of protection against competition, of the desirableness of independence of the foreigner, and so on; things that we may heartily rejoice to hear are brought into something like discussion; for when all the

rest of the world has exploded them as nonsensical, it is well that they should be now put forward and subjected to investigation, in those regions where they are still turned to account. It is a favourite theme, this independence of foreigners. One would imagine that the patriotism of the landlord's breast must be most intense. Yet he seems to forget that he is employing guano to manure his fields; that he is spreading a foreign surface over his English soil, through which every atom of corn is to grow; becoming thereby polluted with the dependence upon foreigners which he professes to abjure.

To what is he left, this disclaimer against foreigners and advocate of dependence upon home? Trace him through his career. This was very admirably done by an honourable gentleman, who just now addressed you, at the Salisbury contest. His opponent urged this plea, and Mr. Bouverie stripped him, as it were, from head to foot, showing that he had not an article of dress upon him which did not render him in some degree dependent upon foreigners. We will pursue this subject, and trace his whole life. What is the career of the man whose possessions are in broad acres? Why, a French cook dresses his dinner for him, and a Swiss valet dresses him for dinner; he hands down his lady, decked with pearls that never grew in the shell of a British oyster; and her waving plume of ostrich-feathers certainly never formed the tail of a barn-door fowl. The viands of his table are from all countries of the world; his wines are from the banks of the Rhine and the Rhone. In his conservatory, he regales his sight with the blossoms of South-American flowers. In his smoking-room, he gratifies his scent with the weed of North America. His favourite horse is of Arabian blood; his pet dog, of the St. Bernard's breed. His gallery is rich with pictures from the Flemish school, and statues from Greece. For his amusements, he goes to hear Italian singers warble German music, followed by a French ballet. If he rises to judicial honours, the ermine that decorates his shoulders is a production that was never before on the back of a British beast. His very mind is not English in its attainments; it is a mere pic-nic of foreign contributions. His poetry and philosophy are from Greece and Rome; his geometry is from Alexandria; his arithmetic is from Arabia; and his religion

from Palestine. In his cradle, in his infancy, he rubbed his gums with coral from Oriental oceans; and when he dies, his monument will be sculptured in marble from the quarries of Carrara.

And yet this is the man who says: "Oh! let us be independent of foreigners! Let us submit to taxation; let there be privation and want; let there be struggles and disappointments; let there be starvation itself; only let us be independent of foreigners!" I quarrel not with him for enjoying the luxuries of other lands, the results of arts that make it life to live. I wish not only that he and his order may have all the good that any climate or region can bear for them—it is their right, if they have wherewithal to exchange for it; what I complain of is, the sophistry, the hypocrisy, and the iniquity of talking of independence of foreigners in the article of food, while there is dependence in all these materials of daily enjoyment and recreation. Food is the article the foreigner most wants to sell; food is that which thousands of our operatives most want to buy; and it is not for him—the mere creature of foreign agency from head to foot—to interpose and say: "You shall be independent; I alone will be the very essence and quintessence of dependence." We compromise not this question with parties such as these; no, nor with the legislature.

We are not going to the legislature this session. No more petitioning. Members of the House of Commons! Members of the House of Lords! do as you please, and what you please; our appeal is *to your masters*. The League goes to the constituencies, to the creators of legislators, and tells them they have made the article badly, and instructs them how to form it better on the first occasion. Here we carry on the warfare; appealing, not, as has been falsely said, to calumny, delusion, or to corruption, but calling up in those who possess political power the intelligence and independence which dignify humanity. And it is remarkable the contrast in the elections that have already taken place since this course was adopted by the League: that while their adversaries seek out for every little spot, for every speck of dirt and corruption, in human character, and build upon that; while those who espouse the interest of the great land monopoly, hunt up the tailor and shoemaker, or the glovemaker, and say:

"Have you not a little monopoly of your own?—keep up our great monopoly, and we will uphold your little monopoly;" "Tickle me, Toby; tickle me, do;"—while they endeavour in every way to play upon all the foolishness and baseness of human nature,—the League has endeavoured to work by intelligence and principle, and by these alone; calling out, not what is brutal, but what is most divine in human nature; thus realising that spirit of independence, without which no institution, no forms of freedom, no rights of voting, nothing that society can enact or sanction, ever made a people free and great, or ever will. For this reason it was that they were held to be such "monstrous interlopers," such "strangers;" this raised the cry in London and Salisbury, "Here are people come up amongst us whose homes are in Lancashire; great strangers, who have no business here."

This was the same sort of indignation that Doctor Caius manifested in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, when he found Slender's man in his closet. When he inquired of Dame Quickly who was there, the lady only inflamed his wrath the more by saying, "He is an honest man." Why, the monopolist uses the same language as Doctor Caius: "Vat shall de honest man do in my closet? there is no honest man shall come into my closet." But the honest man has got into his closet with a search-warrant, and finds there what shall bring them to shame and confusion, exposing the sophistry, laying bare the tricks, and paving the way for future struggles of a similar description, and of yet more resplendent consequences. We have no compromise on such a question as the Corn Laws, because we cannot compromise with crime; and I hold these laws to be one great crime, both in themselves and in their consequences. On the very face of the thing they are a fraud; for when a class says to a nation, "Exclude all foreign corn; be independent of foreigners;" does it not imply that they, the home growers, will furnish the supply? Do they not, by the very fact of interposing to prevent our getting provisions abroad, undertake that there shall be food of their raising at home?

Have they done this? Have they produced it at a price at which the great mass of the community, however industrious, could afford to purchase a sufficient quantity?

Have there not been want and starvation both in this country and Ireland, while there has been ample abundance which has been increasing the wealth of the landowners, but not ministering to the necessities of the community? Have they the power? Why, the very increase of our population, some 230,000 a year, would require to feed it the addition every year of a county as large as that of Surrey, for its produce to administer to this additional number of mouths a sufficient quantity of bread and meat. Can they do this? Can they add another county to England? Can they make, as it were, another England? Can they create and furnish us with the produce of a new Ireland; or can they keep the old Ireland?

I say that those laws are a crime, because they occasion the destruction of human food. Not long ago—about the time I was at Liverpool—large quantities of American butter were brought out of the warehouses; a hole was bored in each firkin—the butter would not answer, as a commercial speculation, to pay the duty on it—and into those firkins pitch and other substances were poured, in order that this butter might be rendered altogether unfit for human use. I believe that ultimately it was actually made into grease for the wheels of the locomotive engines. At Sunderland the same thing has occurred twice within no great number of weeks, with respect to wheat kept there in bond. The people were starving, and the wheat was all the while rotting within the warehouses, until at last it was brought out from under the Government lock and key, by her Majesty's servants the Custom-house officers, taken to a dunghill, mixed with all sorts of substances, and thereby rendered utterly unfit for use for the common purposes of human food, was there converted into manure—and this at a time when the people were talking about the Poor Laws, charities, subscriptions, and collections, and of their tender feelings for the sufferings of the poor.

And there is more yet of crime. Let any one look at the table of committals for offences, and compare it with the price of wheat from year to year. The exceptions are very rare in which a rise in the price of corn is not also attended by an increase in the number of committals. In the years from 1834 to 1836, when wheat was at 44*s.* 3*d.* a quarter, the average number of commitals was 21,000;

from 1837 to 1841, when wheat averaged 63*s.* 2*d.*, the annual number of committals was 25,000: 4000 criminals a year added by this horrible sliding scale of guilt and misery! To take extreme years: in 1835, wheat was a little under 40*s.* a quarter; the number of committals was 20,731. In 1842, when wheat was 57*s.* 3*d.*, the committals rose to 31,309. There are calculations indicating, by the experience of many years, the results of this system. It is a horrible operation to trace out these iniquitous laws, depressing the circumstances, murdering the soul as well as the body, making even the generous and meritorious tendencies of our nature subservient to crime, rendering the love of a man for his own family, and those dependent upon him, a motive and an incentive to guilt, creating crime, and mocking the repetition to the Queen's proclamation for the suppression of vice, by an Act of Parliament for the production of criminality.

Oh! I do declare, before heaven and earth, that I would rather hold up my hand at the bar of the Old Bailey as a culprit driven to crime by the feeling which these iniquitous laws produce, than be one of those who have profited by their enactment to coin money out of the hearts, lives, and consciences of their fellow-creatures.

Nor is this all. The annual table of mortality shows analogous results to those of the table of crime; with the price of wheat, the number of deaths falls and rises. In 1798 and in 1802, wheat was 59*s.* a quarter; the average of deaths, 20,508 in London. In 1800, an intermediate year, and therefore not liable to any exception on the ground of increased population, when wheat was upwards of 60*s.*, the number of deaths was 25,670: 5000 deaths in that year analagous with the increase in the price of food, directly tending to impress on our mind the connection of cause and effect. It seems as if that grim monster had forgotten his impartiality—as if the bony tyrant had become the very servant of monopoly; and though it is still, in some measure, true that "the rich and the poor lie down together in the grave," yet wealth, by its laws, sends the poor there first, and sends them there in numbers to prepare for its own reception. The effect of the classification of society by the different degrees of safety and good lodging and nutriment is, that while of the middle and

higher class only one child in five fails to attain the age of five years, in the working class half the number die before they reach that period.

Are we to be told that further experiments should be made in laws connected with phenomena such as these? Are we to give Peel's bill a longer trial, or any form of monopoly whatever? Are we to have more experiments of privation and disappointment and suffering, of crime and of death? It was an old medical axiom to let experiments be made upon vile and worthless bodies; but here are laws making the most cruel of all experiments, even upon the body of a great and suffering nation. I say, this is enough to arouse every feeling of our souls, and to proclaim a crusade of men, women, and children, of all ranks and classes, against this iniquity; listening to no compromise until it be put down utterly and for ever. For this we band ourselves.

You, inhabitants of the metropolis, will, I trust, take your rightful position, and go forward in the van, and lead on the march of the provinces. For this we combine our exertions, determined not to rest until we behold realised that great object of our anticipation—the giant form of emancipated labour throned on the ruins of all existing monopolies. For this we strive from year to year; and while there is one atom left of restriction on the statute-book—while there is any enactment injurious to the rights of industry and of labour—while there is any imposition on the food of the people—we will never desist from agitation—no, never, never, never! Towards this consummation from year to year we hold onward our course, endeavouring in all its realisations to effect not only good for ourselves, but for other classes also, however blind they may be to their own interests: for we see in universal freedom the best security for the largest property, as well as the rightful and honourable encouragement for those who have no property at all. We believe commercial freedom will develop intellectual and moral freedom,—teaching the different classes their dependence on each other, uniting nations in bonds of brotherhood, and tending to realise the anticipations of the great poet before referred to, and whom this day gave to Scotland and the world:

"Now let us pray, that come it may,
As come it shall for a' that:
That man to man, the world o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that."

No. VII.

AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE.

February 15th, 1844.

If there hangs upon two honourable members of Parliament, who have addressed you this evening, the doom which used to be much more frequently on judge's lips than, happily, it is at the present day, and if they are about to be "taken to the place from whence they came," I trust that, upon reaching their destination, they will report to the assembly collected there that the Anti-Corn-Law League is still in existence; for it was announced in that House, no longer ago than last night, that since the declaration of Sir Robert Peel, on the first night of the session, the Anti-Corn-Law agitation had "dwindled into insignificance."

Yes, it has indeed dwindled from a revenue of 50,000*l.* in the year towards one of 100,000*l.* It has dwindled from small local meetings to such gatherings as I now behold around me; and it has dwindled from the humility of petitioning the House of Commons into appealing to the masters of that assembly. What a strange, imperfect, confused, and ignorant notion must any man have of the Anti-Corn-Law League, who supposes that the breath of members of the House of Commons, or of ministers of the Crown, can cause it to shrink and shrivel up into insignificance! Why, the monopolist legislators take the League to be some petty intrigue or paltry manœuvre of party; something to which the members of their own body are much more accustomed than they are to the grand principles of truth and justice, and the great movement of national opinion. And that man, too, of all persons to be cited in this manner, whose breath has so often blown hot and cold upon subjects; who has aforetime denounced as destructive of the political constitution and the religious establishment of these realms the very measures which he has subsequently submitted to introduce,—of all men his

words are not those before which such a body as the Anti-Corn-Law League is to stand appalled, or at whose command it can shrink into annihilation! Neither upon the will of Sir Robert Peel, nor of any other leader of party, does the existence of this League depend, or the attainment of its great objects, which are now advancing towards accomplishment. We abjure all party alliances!

It has lately been made a boast that even rich Whig landlords are joining the Anti-League Associations. Let them do so: so much the worse for the Whigs, but not for the Anti-Corn-Law League. Our strength is in the principles we hold; it is in the certainty that Free Trade is written down as an important step in the progress of nations; it is in the fact that the claims of industry are founded on the principles of eternal justice. The right of industry to a fair market for its produce may be violated for a time, and be withheld by influence or by violence, but can never permanently be refused to the demands of humanity. Their dicta, upon whatever side of the House they may be, or to whichever party they may lean,—their dicta stop the progress of this League, or prevent the accomplishment of its objects! Why, we may as soon believe that the progress of the coming spring will be retarded or prevented by the bellowing of the bull in Tamworth Park.

But what monopoly cannot effect through the medium of ancient institutions and legitimate forms is, it seems, to be brought about by voluntary associations and combined exertions. Not content with the great Pro-Corn-Law League of the House of Lords, not satisfied with the supplemental Corn-Law League of the House of Commons, or with the committee of the Cabinet and its coerced spokesman, not content with all this, we find a number of little associations springing up here and there all over the country, and crying out, as it were, to these leviathan powers,—

> "Oh, let my little bark attend and sail,
> Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale!"

Very imitative bodies are these new associations! Indeed, they have now taken to copy after us; we have left off petitioning Parliament, and therefore they are just going to begin; I hope the cast-off clothes will fit them gracefully.

They denounce our agitation. The Duke of Richmond says, "agitation is immoral;" and forthwith he puts himself at the head of another agitation! On looking over the various resolutions and proceedings of these meetings, I have endeavoured to ascertain what are their most prominent features, and what they are driving at. Of the two things which stand out the most boldly in relief, one I find is hatred of the League. They do not know exactly what they are about to do, but they must "oppose the League;" they must "stop the League;" they must "put down the League;" and to do all this, they begin by praising the very law of which they have heretofore been complaining; they announce themselves as supporters of the ministry by whom they have just been betrayed; they show their consistency, scarcely knowing what else to drive at, by avowing their intention to uphold a law which they denounced, and to support a premier whom they acknowledged they despise. And then they declare that we are liable to the penalties of the law!

Why, what have they done but put themselves in a position to shield us, if there be any impartiality in the administration of the law, from such inflictions? If we are an illegal body, much more so are they, with their Corresponding Societies, making their conspiracies not "constructive," but open and apparent to all the world. Not that I care about the word "conspiracy;" I should as soon as any other, or perhaps in preference, have addressed myself in the first instance to this meeting by the term "FELLOW CONSPIRATORS." I hold it no disgrace, when the pursuit of a lawful object by lawful means brings men under pains and penalties, to adopt that or any other term whatever which may be applied to them. I do say that, whatever may be the business of our meeting this evening, I should have felt ashamed of myself and of you if the privilege of free meeting and of free speech could be used here without an expression of sympathy with those who are to be punished for its use in the sister country. I say it is sympathy for our own sakes, not for theirs; for, of all men, I take him to have the least need of sympathy who, even in a dungeon,* if he is sent to one, will rule in

* The verdict against O'Connell, tried for conspiracy, &c., was given on the 12th February 1844, and a new trial being refused,

the thoughts, hearts, and devotion of the nation he is serving. It is due to ourselves, and to the best and dearest right that the people of this country possess—the right of publicly meeting; and if it be a great grievance, to do so in numbers proportioned to the greatness of that grievance, to declare their wrongs and demand redress. That right should never be assailed in any locality, or in the person of any individual, without the protest—strong and heartfelt—of every one who values public freedom, for the interests of a nation are only preserved by the boldness of its speech and by its spirit of independence.

But to return to the Anti-League Associations. The crimination of the League seems to be their first great pervading object; this is the most intense feeling in their hearts, and the first idea to which they give utterance. But for what do they criminate us? Of all the petty, paltry charges ever scraped together, some of those that figure in the very head and front are the most pitiful. The first resolution of one great agricultural body states it to be a most intolerable thing that the League sends paid lecturers about the country. They charge it as a crime upon us that lecturers are sent to teach public meetings. But even they have not the impudence to charge it upon us, that in some instances ruffians are sent to disturb public meetings. They forget, too, that the great teacher and lecturer of the League is one who is not, and cannot be, paid by human agency; its greatest and most efficient lecturer is an invisible power, but most formidable in its results—a missionary from the council of Heaven to the heart of humanity; a lecturer that speaks secretly to the minds of those who listen, as well as with the voice of him who addresses an assembly; an undying power, but every where pledged to support Free-Trade doctrines, and cry down oppression—and the name of that unpaid lecturer is LOVE OF JUSTICE!

They complain, too, of our petitions, now that we have done with them. The generous maxim of "nothing but good of the dead," seems not to operate upon them. A

sentence of one year's imprisonment and a fine of 2000*l.* was passed on the 24th May. An appeal to the House of Lords ended, on the 4th September 1844, in the reversal of the judgment of the court below.

number of stories are raked up against us, amongst which is that of a man having forged many names to an Anti-Corn-Law petition. They do not accuse us of forging names to a requisition to a monopolist candidate to stand for a county! With rather an unadvised choice of illustration, they say that one man went into a churchyard and copied a number of names from the gravestones, and appended them to a petition against the Corn Laws. Why, if the rogue actually did this, there was some shrewdness about him; and had their own perception been morally acute, I think they would have abstained from selecting such a particular illustration of the charge; for in the graveyards of this country, in those both of crowded towns and remote villages, how many senseless inhabitants are there that have been brought to that condition, indirectly, indeed, but not the less certainly, by the operation of these accursed Corn Laws! Could the dead interfere in our transitory concerns, myriads of them would have a right to petition on this matter. They have been victims of the system which the living are yet enduring, and under which they are writhing; and were there a power to reach their dust,—could old thoughts, feelings, and reminiscences be gathered together, and could they come from those graves to which so many of them have been carried with but limited rites and shortened ceremony—"the little bell tolled hastily at the pauper's funeral;" could they be gathered together from their resting-places, and be assembled in the neighbourhood of that body which sits and legislates on life and death,—oh! there would be such a crowd, that the avenues to the Houses of Parliament would be blocked up far and wide; it would require a little army of horse, foot, and artillery—with a Wellington at their head—to cut a passage through the multitudes; and if this were done, the appropriate result would be—that of finding the chaplain of the House of Commons preaching a sermon on that occasion from the text—"Thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

Next in prominence to this most unwise disposition to vituperate the League, I find in the proceedings of these bodies an immensity of professions of attachment to the labourer. This is the stalking-horse in every string of resolutions, and in all their speeches. The good of the

labourer and his worth seem to be their beings' end and aim. It would appear from these statements as if landlords were only born that they might exercise love to labourers. One would suppose from such proceedings that they would never meet again at their festivities, but that after the toast of "Church and State," and its usual accompaniment of the song of

"A jolly full bottle!"

the very next toast would be, "Our love to the labourer!" and if their description of his Arcadian state and rural felicity be true, this toast would be followed by the song, in character, of

"Such a beauty I did grow!"

They love the labourer so dearly, that they take care the fine proportions of his form shall not be spoiled by too rich or ample living, or obscured by too great an abundance of clothing. They love upon the principle laid down by a curate whose faith was doubted as to its orthodoxy, and who replied that he could not be expected to believe very largely,—he only believed at the rate of 80*l.* annually, while the bishop believed at the rate of 15,600*l.* a year.

So it seems at these agricultural meetings, the great lords and landed proprietors love the labourer at the rate of their 30,000*l.*, 40,000*l.*, 60,000*l.*, 80,000*l.*, a year, while the poor labourer in return can only love at the rate of 8*s.* or 9*s.* a week. There has been nothing like this wonderful attachment since the days "when King Cophetua loved the beggar-maid;" but that potentate did not make the maid a beggar that he might love her, as the landowners' system has made the labourer to whom they profess this attachment. True affection has often been celebrated in song, of

"The lass that loves a sailor:"

but what in the world is that to the affection of "the lord that loves a labourer"? They love them so dearly, that for their sakes they will even injure the rest of the community; they will degrade their own character; pervert their power and station; and abuse legislative duties. They love them so dearly, that for their sakes they will take out of the pockets of the public any amount of rent which they can

enhance by taxation on food. "The labourers must not be thrown out of employment;" they, we are told, must have work; and "if Free-Trade principles are to prevail," they gravely say, "why, the land will go out of cultivation, and the poor labourer will starve."

Now what is the meaning of this statement? For love itself—even the love of the landlord for the labourer—must sometimes be subjected to analysis. The owner of 50,000 acres, who gets from them his 50,000*l.* a year, says, if Free-Trade principles prevail, his land will go out of cultivation, and England will become a desert. Does he mean that the land itself will take wings and fly away, if he takes no rent for it? Does he wish us to believe that the land will yield no produce to any body that will till it? There it is, and no alteration in the laws of the land can annihilate that soil, or blast the power with which Providence has endowed it, of bringing ample return to the seed which man deposits therein. Why, let him throw it out of cultivation; and suppose there are 1500 labourers now upon any particular property; if it is altogether abandoned, there would be nice squatting for those labourers. I take it that they would be pretty sure to turn it to some account; and I think it would go hard but that they would manufacture bread and cheese out of it. If they had no capital to work with, why then, as we are told that the hares and rabbits on some of the estates need a considerable reduction, they might live on the game till their harvests came round. Thus, with a little power of coöperation, these 50,000 acres would be covered with industrious people, who would get food for their support, and who would have some surplus to spare, I take it, to find themselves in clothing.

This is what comes of the cant phrase, when examined fairly, of throwing land out of cultivation. If this were to happen, the labourer would think it the happiest day of his life when the landlord was crossed in love with him, and driven away from his estate. But as such a state of things progressed, and the comfort of this little society increased, it is much to be suspected that, after a time, the landlord would come back again; there would be a repetition of scenes such as have disgraced both Scotland and Ireland; there would be notice to quit upon those who had taken possession of the abandoned property; the horrors

of a clearing would be witnessed such as have occurred elsewhere, in which whole families have been known to lie down in the ditches, and to have sought in vain a refuge from the pitiless elements, to which they were exposed by equally pitiless landlords; and the reënactment of the old Sutherland tragedy would end the farce of "The Labourer's Love."

When did all this love commence, and what is the history of this most fond and affectionate care of one class by another? How old is it? Does it belong to those ancient times of our country, when the old cultivator of the soil was required by his lease to know his "team of oxen" and his "team of men"—when slaves were fattened here and sold in Ireland, to the detriment of the home market there, until it was glutted with the surplus produce? Was it in the fourteenth century, when pestilence had ravaged the country, and the number of those whose business was tillage of the soil was so reduced that they claimed, as they had a right to do, higher wages for their work, and when the "Statute of Labourers" was, therefore, passed—a law which some have praised even in our day—enacting that the labourers should be flogged to their work, and compelled to labour at the wages which they had had before this opportunity came?

Was it in the fifteenth century, when it was the law that if a man had been twelve years in the occupation of husbandry he was to follow the plough-tail for the rest of his life, and not be allowed even to apprentice his children in towns, lest they should be in a better position than himself, and the lord of the soil lose the service of his serfs? Was it even in the sixteenth century, when a man catching any idle stroller might force him to work, forcibly take him for his slave, feed him with the offal of his table, and brand him even, that he might be known to belong to his service? Was it in the period from that time till the era of manufacturing energy and enterprise—a period during which the wages of the labourer, as measured in wheat, fell more than one-half, while the price of that wheat more than doubled? Was it in times subsequent to that, under old or new Poor Laws, sometimes subjecting the labourer to the degradation of being paid his honestly earned wages out of the parish funds; at others turning the screw upon him,

and telling him that he was a late comer to nature's table, and for him there was no cover set,—bidding him, even in his rags and starvation, be independent? Is it now, when he is gifted with 20*d.* a day should the weather be fine, and loses it if the rain comes down? Is it in the present day, when his life wears out in a miserable succession of toil, from week to week and month to month?

Where can we find the origin, where trace the history and see the marks, of that paternal care by which one especial class now affirms that it has the labourer of the country under its peculiar and fond protection? If such be the feeling of the landowners to the labourers, why do they not bestow more exclusively their attention on them? for it happens to be the habit of legislators of this class to meddle with any business rather than their own. They are very anxious about factories, where people are paid higher wages by far than any which are earned in the employment of their tenants; they are for making regulations about hours and schools; they are always prompt at interfering with silk, cotton, and woollen manufactures—with every thing in the world; but, meanwhile, there is the poor labourer whom they love so well, the most unprotected and unhelped being in the community. Now and then, perhaps, they give him some 10*s.* prize for a twenty years' service in the same family, coupled, as it was of late, with an admonition from the right honourable and reverend chairman of the meeting, in distributing the prizes, that the successful labourer should "not listen to people who were given to change; for the Bible taught that there must always be poor in the land."

And what is this very assumption of being agriculturalists, on the part of the proprietary? What is it but a section of the same cant that we find exhibited in the whole course of their proceedings? Why, the nature of a man's property, and the use that is made of it, does not affect his character or his occupation. Being the owner of a library does not make a man learned; as Mr. Cobden has pithily said, "a man is not a sailor because he is a shipowner;" neither are proprietors of great estates entitled to claim the honourable appellation of "agriculturists;" they are not the cultivators of the ground; they are only the recipients of its bounty, taking the

lion's share of the profit. If this language were allowed in reference to other matters,—if we were to designate the personal qualities and occupations of people by the use made of their property,—it would follow that the noble member of this League, the Marquis of Westminster, was the greatest bricklayer in London; that the Duke of Bedford was the most distinguished dramatist and musician; and that the clergy of the Abbey Church in Westminster, some of whose property is devoted to much more questionable uses, were eminent professors of prostitution.

The real question, stripped of all mystification, between the League and those by whom it is opposed, is this, Whether the landed proprietors are to absorb all power? whether they are to be not merely a great and influential class; but whether they are to be the nation,—the entire nation? for this is really the object at which they are aiming. They acknowledge a Queen, but they name her ministers, they dictate the measures, and even the language, of those ministers. They acknowledge a legislature, but *they are* one House, and possess influence enough to command the other House. They acknowledge the middle class, but they command its votes, and cherish in it only the most degrading habits of servility. They acknowledge the manufacturing class, but they cripple its enterprise and restrict its markets. They acknowledge the working class, and they tax their bones, sinews, and labour; they tax the very bread which is their daily support.

I grant that they were once "the nation." There was a time when the landed interest of England was the nation, and when there was no other known or recognised power. But what sort of a time was that? A time when the people of the country were mere serfs,—when they were "property,"—when they could be flogged and branded and sold. There was a time when they were the nation: and where were then all the arts of life? where was literature and learning? The philosopher was in his cell, only showing himself to become the object of suspicion among the ignorant, and perhaps of persecution; or else sent for by the rich, that he might be bribed to give them magic aid to win the love of a lady's heart, or paralyse the might of an opponent's arm. There was a time when they were the nation,—when they went forth in their

mailed panoply, leading their followers to slaughter, from which good care was taken to preserve themselves as much as possible,—when they rode almost unresisted over their helpless, naked opponents, and were only capable of being put *hors de combat* by being cracked, like lobsters, in their shells. There was a time when they were the nation,—and what a time was that for the towns!—when every citizen who had any thing to lose had to fly from petty tyrants to the throne; to strengthen despotism with all his power, in order that he might have some resource against this overbearing oligarchy; and when, if there had been Rothschilds in the world, they would have had their teeth drawn to get at their treasures. When they were the nation, no invention had enriched the land and made the metals and wood do the work of millions of human hands; no press had scattered knowledge over the whole face of the country, carrying intellectual light into hovels and cottages; no mercantile navy covered the sea, and sought the aid of every breeze that blew to reach some distant shore to bring back its freight of necessaries and luxuries. When they were the nation, it was a land not worth living in; and were the natural effects of such enactments as the Corn Laws to have their full scope,—towards this period would it turn back the wheels of time, and bring the nation so much nearer barbarism than it now is removed from it by the lapse and growth of centuries.

Proprietorship is not nationality! The peerage is not the nation! Brains and hearts go for something in constituting a people; our philosophers who think, our statesmen who act, our poets who sing, and our hardy multitudes who work,—these are the nation! The members of the aristocracy take their place of true nobility in the nation when they coöperate with mind and heart, and, like some of the worthy friends of this Association, give themselves to objects of patriotism and the promotion of public right. Such men redeem the class to which they belong, and shed a lustre upon others from their own inherent brightness. We regard all who toil—be it with thought, or with the strong hand—as members of the community,—as those who help to build up a people, and to make a nation free, great, and prosperous! And surely, if we look at the position of the landowners of this country,

there is so much in it which they cannot, by any change or chance short of tremendous and universal convulsion, be deprived of, that they might well be content therewith; "too happy, if their happiness they knew:" for it is certainly true, as has often been said, that England is the paradise of landowners; made so by the untiring labour, the indomitable energy, and the daring enterprise of its industrious children. What would they have? Is not the land theirs from sea to sea—theirs even the bird that wings its flight in the air? We cannot till a field without their permission; we cannot build a house without their consent. They walk the earth as if they were the gods who had made it; and yet, not content with all this, they go on artificially to enhance the price of its produce to others; not satisfied with being the lords of the soil, they aspire also to be the lords of industry, and the dolers out of the labourer's food.

Why are they not content? They have shuffled off from the land the burdens that once pressed upon it; they took their estates originally when the title was not honest industry, but the sword, rapine, and violence; they had them burdened with the support of Church and State; they found armies for the king when it pleased him to take the field for foreign conquest, or to repel domestic invasion; they have now turned into sources of emolument the very burdens that once hung upon the land; and they derive from the Church, the army, and from our various institutions, resources for their own offspring and their dependents: and yet, having done all this, they seek to weigh industry down to the ground with a heavier burden than ever pressed upon the land. "Free markets!" was the cry some centuries ago, when Wat Tyler and his peasant companions were driven to insurrection by the extent of oppression of the monopolies of the landlords and corporations. "Free markets!" was the cry of Wat Tyler. The dagger that struck him down still sticks in the arms of the Corporation of London—a warning against violence to those who uphold that ancient controversy, and who raise, as we do now, the same cry of "Free markets!" not in England only, but all the world over.

We demand that the markets should be as free as they have made those markets in which they hire venal tongues,

or traffic for venal votes. We demand free markets,—free as the air, unshackled as the billows of the sea, or as the thoughts in the soul of man! They have had the lion's share of commercial prosperity, and yet what great advancements have been made! What have machinery, railroads, steamboats, or any thing else done towards enriching the industrious, that have not also raised the worth of the land and the rate of rents? There was an outcry—a putting forth, as it is called, of "a great fact"—in the newspapers the other day, namely, that the price of corn was now only the same as in 1791. "How, then," it was said, "could the farmer be expected to produce this in competition with foreigners, when he has so many more burdens?" But in this statement the fact was suppressed, that although the price of corn may be now the same as in 1791, and the wages of labour no higher than at that period, the rent in this country has doubled, and more than doubled, since that time.

And there is the real burden that presses on the farmer, and which cripples him—as it does all other industry—from the power of a most successful competition with foreigners. Let them enjoy their prosperity; but let them not wound, limit, and restrain the untiring toil by which that prosperity is won. We fear them not—with their boast or their threatenings! Here are we in our own voluntary gatherings, and yonder, they in their set meeting, by royal mandate. Here are we in our miscellaneous and multitudious assemblages, and there are they in their exclusiveness. Here are we in our hired theatre, and there are they in their senatorial halls, and with yet statelier buildings erecting and to be paid for by a nation's toil, and at the expense of the privations of thousands. Here are we with right, and they with might; we take up the gauntlet they have thrown down, and we hurl defiance in their teeth! We advance to the conflict which they brave—of opinion against power—breaking no law, even of their making: in the spirit of that peaceful morality, which they profess to have made part and parcel of the law of England, we carry out this question; and we will win for them deliverance from the curse that the oppressor brings on his own head; for ourselves, emancipation from the disgrace of being plundered and enslaved; and for our

country, deliverance from the prospect of confusion, from the endurance of wretchedness, from anarchy and desolation.

The age of feudalism is past, and the spirit of feudalism cannot again govern this country. It may be strong in the *prestige* of the past, and glitter in the splendour which it has won from the toils of industry; it may fortify itself in the bulwarks of institutions, it may surround itself with a servile multitude; but the spirit of feudalism must succumb before the genius of humanity. The spirit, the principle, and the power of feudalism must stand by, and make way for the rights of industry, and the progress of nations towards commercial, political, and intellectual liberty.

No. VIII.

AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE.

March 6th, 1844.

MR. CHAIRMAN,—many allusions have been made this evening—some most felicitously by yourself*—to the associations which are now forming in different parts of the country, and which are at this time engaged in establishing in the metropolis their "Central Anti-League." But in those allusions one particular view has not been taken, or, at least, it has been but slightly glanced at, which is, to my apprehension, the most important in which they can be contemplated. In those Anti-League Associations I see one of the greatest triumphs that this League has achieved, one of the most remarkable indications of its rapid and successful progress. For what are they? They are a confession that the public voice must at last decide this great question of the repeal of the Corn Laws. They concede that even parliament is not the ultimate tribunal for the settlement of this point; but that there is a greater power which has to be conciliated by persuasion, and by the semblance, at least, of facts and arguments. In those associations we have dragged the landed aristocracy of Great Britain to the bar of public opinion, and made it plead there. Their resolutions and speeches are all addressed to the public ear. These inheritors of ancient titles that have descended almost from the Norman Conquest,—these lords of parliament, and possessors of the broad lands of England, with all their pomp of station and of office,—these men, the farmers' masters, clergymen's patrons, the supporters, or deemed so, of whatever is rich, varied, grand, and lovely in art or science,—this great and proud body confesses that it is put upon its defence; that an indictment has been found against it; that it must answer for its doings to the public; that it must plead in a court where, "Not guilty, upon my honour," will never be admitted; but where valid arguments and substantial facts must show its

* Mr. George Wilson.

case if it has one, or consign it deservedly to general reprobation. What can we desire better than to bring matters to this issue? We have the aristocracy now—the monopolists—where we have always wished to find them; in a position in which they must submit to certain awkward cross-questionings like other people, who have to hold up their hands at the bar—where former deeds and doings may be gone into, where the history of class-misgovernment for class-interests may all be exposed to the public gaze, and canvassed according to its true merits—and where the question may be put to them which has been found so awkward by many personages at the bar of justice, "Pray, were you ever in trouble before?" Whether their answer be in the affirmative or the negative, unless they get well through the matter, they will be very likely to be in trouble again ere long; for, if their obstinacy prevent the just and speedy settlement of this question, the time may come when the question will be enlarged, and indemnity for the past will be coupled with security for the future.

One must look with charity on exertions which are made in a new sphere; and I would in all friendliness—as one who may have seen something more of popular agitation than many of the titled personages who are now engaging in it—suggest to them some matter which may be worthy of their consideration; and one especially,—which is, that they should take care not to underrate the understandings of the public to the extent to which they seem disposed; no, not even of any class whatever. The people of this country—if they have not the advantage of instruction in Latin, Greek, and mathematics, by college tutors—have yet eyes, ears, and brains, and are not so easily imposed on as some seem to think by that species of logic or rhetoric which is known by the name of "humbug."

Some observations, in reply to us, have been thrown out, in the shape of a small paper, which has been given away by thousands; and which was distributed, I understand, to almost every working man who entered Freemasons' Hall on the memorable 4th of March; which is an exhibition of that kind of disregard of the intellect of the working people of this country which I had in view.

Now, there are many matters in this paper, which is headed "The Corn Laws," printed and published at the *Church and State* office, No. 342 Strand, and which professes to be rather a catalogue of facts than any thing else. It contains matters which must be very trite to such an assemblage as this. I will read a few of these *facts*, as a specimen of the manner in which the young agitators—these new-fledged demagogues—enter upon their novel functions.

The paper is headed, "Facts are stubborn things." The first fact is this: "According to the census of 1831, there are in the United Kingdom 2,470,411 males above twenty years of age employed in agriculture; and 710,531 in manufactures. Seven-ninths of the population are dependent on agriculture, and two-ninths on manufactures." Setting aside all other deductions from this most extraordinary classification, why, it would occur, I should think, to almost every journeyman weaver as he entered Freemasons' Hall, and looked at this paper, that this calculation threw the whole of Ireland into the scale of agricultural population. Well, take it on that ground. What business, then, have the monopolists to talk of the agricultural interest? For, if their assumption be right, we have a majority of that agricultural interest in our favour. We have had, I say, the voice of the Irish people pronounced here by their acknowledged leader—and reëchoed by your sympathies on a very recent occasion—declaring that they were heart and soul with us in this cause of a repeal of the Corn Laws. And why should they not be? A perilous subject is this Ireland to the agricultural monopolists' interest; for there the Corn-Law system is exhibited in full bloom. Why, the soil in that country seems to grow landlords like potatoes! I have heard of many a tenant who has four to his own share; all of them squeezing something out of the produce of his daily toil, until perhaps he has come—a labourer and a beggar—to this country to obtain wherewith to pay the rental of his own potato-patch. Pursue the system there, and it will be shown as bringing humanity down to the lowest stage of distress and want, as inconsistent with all social order and human comfort and enjoyment, as a state of things which ought not to be endured an hour longer than any people could shake off the yoke. Ireland is a demonstration

of the futility and mischievousness of the landlords' system, and of the fallacies which our new agitators have endeavoured to thrust into the minds of the credulous.

Another of these alleged facts is, that every quarter of wheat introduced into the country supersedes just as much labour as would be required to produce it at home. Why, surely that depends on how it is introduced. There might be some plausibility in such a statement as this if the land grew such quantities of food that every individual in every locality had as much as he could consume; but while there are millions "rejoicing," as it is called, "on potatoes,"—multitudes, able and willing to work, but who have no means, by any thing that they could produce having a sale in this country, to earn the food they need,—why, how glaring, how cruel, and insulting a falsehood is this to the honest man who would win his food from the foreigner!

Another of these *facts* is, that in Prussia land can be rented at 1*s*. 3*d*. per acre, and that wheat is sold for 14*s*. 9*d*. per quarter, and that the labourers' wages are 5*d*. per day. Now, this, I think, was not a wise thing to tell the working men of London; still less prudent to speak in this manner to the tenant-farmers and agricultural labourers through the country. There are very many of them who would deem it no great mischief if the lands were rented at 1*s*. 3*d*. per acre instead of from 18*s*. to 30*s*. It would be just as fertile, and certainly would not return less profits; and the condition of the labourer would be never the worse if here, as in Prussia, he could earn the annual rent of two acres of land in the course of a week.

Another fact is, that "agricultural wages in England are regulated by the price of wheat, the value of a day's labour for the last hundred years being one peck of wheat." This is said in the face of authentic records of wages, and the price of wheat, which shows that the weekly wages of the farm-labourer, as measured in pints of wheat, have varied from 63 to 96; and that, as to the mechanic and artisan, their wages have remained exactly the same when wheat was at 52*s*. as when it was at 105*s*. per quarter.

It will never do to trifle thus with the working classes of this country. This may be called, and to a certain extent it is, a middle-class agitation. I am sorry that there should be any deduction from the unanimity of the work-

ing classes in their support of it, because it is preëminently their question; and more deeply than any rank or class of the community are they concerned in that assertion of the rights of industry which the League is so determinedly making. But, with all my regret as to the deduction of their support, I think it becomes this meeting, the British people, and the aristocracy especially, to render the respect which is due to the character and intelligence of the working people of this country. Their errors, in some measure, have leaned to virtue's side. The worst fault ascribed to them of late years has been an excessive eagerness in the pursuit, and too little scrupulousness in means for the attainment, of political rights; that they were more impatient than was prudent of being in a slave class, and not members of a free community; that they wished to realise at once what is called the great maxim of our constitution, that no one should be taxed but by his own consent. The fault, if it be such, has something in it which is truthful, praiseworthy, and honourable; whilst in their indomitable energy, their patience under that toil which no people on the face of the earth can endure as they do, from week to week and year to year; in their teachability, and the progress which they have made in the use of the different means of knowledge which have been placed within their reach; in the number of men eminent in our literature, and in the annals of science, who have sprung from their ranks; in all that belongs to the history of the working classes of this country,—I say that they have shown themselves not only strong in arm, but sound in head, true of heart, deserving of the sympathy of all, and especially of respectful treatment for their minds and interests from the aristocracy.

But, to return to our subject: I said that we have now got the aristocracy at the bar of public opinion. They take great pains to assure the world that their position is one of "self-defence." I believe that scarcely one Anti-League has been formed in any place throughout the country, which has not set forth in its first resolution that it is merely "a defensive body." In the selection of this word "defensive," there is perhaps something skilful, because men are naturally inclined to look favourably upon those who merely defend themselves. But yet there is a further

question to be put to these gentlemen. Having thus told us that they only act on the defensive, they must submit to be asked—"What is it, then, which you defend?" Why, the thief in the streets acts on the defensive when he knocks down the man whom he has robbed. If it should appear that they are defending as their right that which is the produce of our wrong—if it should turn out that what they really mean to defend is our money in their pockets—why, defensiveness then loses its former favourable association. However gallant may be the stand made by a body in such a cause as this, it can bring with it no glory. There will be no niche in the columns of history—no wreath assigned by the poet of future ages—to those who shall have defended to the last the spoils which they had extorted from industry; nor can they be entitled to any more favourable regard because their defence was not made with the struggle of the battle-field, but by Acts of Parliament, which they were enabled to pass by corrupting or intimidating voters, giving the landowners themselves power to lay a tax on the food of the community.

But they are not satisfied with being brought within the meaning of the proverb to which our chairman alluded, of a man being his own client: but in this self-defence they have pushed forward others. At one time it is tenant-farmers who take the chair, make the speeches, and propound the resolutions; for in this vigorous self-defence all means are adopted. In self-defence they associate; for this purpose they organise themselves in a manner which they had previously described as illegal. In self-defence they correspond with other societies; and in self-defence they even venture to county meetings like that at Somerset, and get soundly beaten—all in self-defence. But, to make amends for the meeting to which I have alluded, another was held at Bristol which was to counterbalance the effect produced at that of Bridgewater. Well, upon this latter occasion a tenant-farmer was placed in the chair. What was the best thing which he could find to say? Why, that the farmers of England were capable of competing with the foreigners of any other country, provided they only started upon fair ground; that it was hardly just that they should proceed upon such a race with a heavy weight upon their shoulders, having to compete against

those who had comparatively nothing to carry. If the farmers of England have a heavy weight of taxation upon their shoulders, I should like to know who laid it there? Who are the authors of the burden of which they complain, but those very landlords whom they are coming forward, or are pushed forward, to screen from the attacks made upon them? Who is it that has oppressed the farmers thus unequally and heavily? Not the Anti-Corn-Law League, assuredly; there is not one member of that body in parliament who would not readily give his vote for an equalisation of the farmers' burdens, if such equalisation be really necessary. It is from the side of the House on which the Free-Traders sit that inquiry has been demanded as to what these burdens on land really are; while the farmers' masters—if I may not call them farmers' friends—are the parties who have pertinaciously resisted such inquiry. But if the burdens are equal, surely it is not by levying another tax on the consumers that the farmer will be enabled to run his race. If our debt be heavy—if the impost which it requires be such as to press heavily on industry—it should bear upon all classes alike; and that which should be spared to the very last is, poverty, with its requisition of the necessary means of supporting human existence.

I cannot imagine that the tenant-farmers willingly or cheerfully allow themselves to be put forward upon these occasions. It is an ungracious task, in which they have little interest, however loudly they may cry out at these one-sided meetings—for two opinions are never allowed at them—and whatever protestations they may make. They remind me of a scene I once witnessed in an infant school, where the children, having been well patronised, were taught a parody on a song then much in vogue—

"Home, sweet home!"

I saw the master fix his knuckles into one of the little one's heads, telling him to sing out louder; which the poor thing did with a most dolorous voice and rueful countenance:

"School, sweet school!
There's nothing like school!"

Were the tenant-farmer free to express the feelings of his

heart, I cannot help thinking that something like this would appear in the features of many a farmer, who at these Anti-League Associations has to sing out,

"Protection, sweet protection!
There's nothing like protection!"

The tenant-farmers not being strong enough for the work imposed on them, there comes forth a miller to the rescue. A considerable stress has been laid in different newspapers, both metropolitan and provincial, on a letter of Mr. Biddle, who is described as the largest corn-dealer and miller in the West of England. His testimony is to this effect. He goes through the lists received from his correspondents of the price of wheat in the different parts of the world, at Odessa, Alexandria, and so on; and then sums it up thus: "In taking the average of the above wheat prices, I have inserted them quite as high as the quotations I have received for the last month; still I find the average to be about 31*s.* 3*d.* per quarter, being somewhat under 3*s.* 11*d.* the imperial bushel; and this," he states, "includes freight and all other expenses except the duty. Now, gentlemen," he says, "the plain question is, can you grow wheat at this price, and live? The League will reply, 'Oh, but the prices will rise abroad.' Do not listen to such deceptive nonsense; the extra thousands upon thousands of acres that would be brought into cultivation would soon fully counteract the extra demand. Only let the foreigner find a regular cash market for his corn, and I will almost defy you to say how cheap he will grow it. Look at the great continent of America: that country alone can spare land enough to send us the produce of more acres than is grown in England."

What! is it really so, that 25*s.* is the difference of price per quarter of wheat made to us by the Corn Laws? Are the landlords really taxing us to this extent? They talk of exaggeration in the statements we make here: no allegation of ours has ever charged upon them a grosser fraud and more extensive and onerous imposition than is here taken up in the way of their defence, and set forth to show how much spoil there is for them to rally round. Why, if they have done this—taking the average income, as it is stated by Mr. M'Culloch, of the people of England at about 17*l.*

per annum—they have levied a poll-tax of 20*s.*; a supplementary income tax on that average of six per cent—three per cent for Sir Robert Peel and the government, and six per cent for the landlords and the Corn Laws; and they have levied this as a poll-tax, pressing more heavily the lower you descend in society, until at last it makes its invasion upon those necessaries which are essential to the very support of our existence. This is their defence, gentlemen! This is their apology for agitation! Good Heavens! What, then, would they regard as an accusation, if this is their defence?

And when is it that this is done—under what circumstances? Why, at a time when the price of food not being so inordinately high as frequently it has been, has caused a revival of manufactures to a certain extent,—enough to be the subject of boast by those who wish to uphold the cause of monopoly,—when yet, under these favourable circumstances, with the winter passing away, we cannot take up a daily paper without seeing something about the destitution in the metropolis, enough to wring any compassionate heart! Why, only within the last two days we read that the Bank of England, the East-India Company, the Worshipful Companies of the Mercers and Grocers, have during the past week each subscribed the liberal sum of 200*l.* in aid of the fund of the Bishop of London's Association for Visiting and Relieving the Poor at their own Dwellings. The gross amount of the fund of this Association is now, we hear, above 20,000*l.*; and little enough too for the purpose for which it is needed. At the same time an institution at Mile End reports to its subscribers that 3500 adult persons have been visited at their homes, and that there are 5000 more to be visited, and, if possible, relieved, if the society can but obtain pecuniary means equal to the emergency. With all this going on, we are yet told, as a defence of the Corn Laws, that they cost the country a larger sum annually than is needed to relieve all this destitution! Why, though I would not willingly consent to any compromise whatever on this momentous question, yet there is one form of compromise that might make me pause; and that is, if leaving the bread-tax upon all who are in such a position of life that they are secure from the pinchings of want,—if the bread that is doled out at the poor-houses and by charities, the food of the working

classes, and the bread that is intended to feed those who make up the various items in the great total of destitution,—if that could be let into the country free of all duty,—I should then say that we might well pause, and think whether in this concession there was not something that had a claim on the consideration of humanity. As it is, there is no relaxation of the monopoly of the great on the plea of charity. Out of this 20,000*l.* which was collected for the Bishop of London's fund for the relief of destitution in the metropolis, if it be all given away in bread, we cannot reckon a smaller sum than 6000*l.* as bread-tax taken on behalf of the landed aristocracy. You cannot disentangle the bread-tax from the charity. There is no subscribing to one without swelling the gains of the other. You are really giving your shillings and your pence in this charity to the nobility of the country; and for every 14*d.* that you subscribe for the starving shirt-women and other poor of the metropolis, you give 6*d.* to the Dukes of Buckingham and Richmond.

Wretched, indeed, must the cause be when the articles of its defence let us into such a scene as this,—showing the splendour of ducal palaces rendered more gorgeous by taxation on the food that is doled out at the neighbouring workhouse. Men who make such infringements on what are justly deemed the rights of their fellow-subjects should bethink themselves, when they come to plead their own cause, and ask, if not for justice, at least for mercy, in that court of public opinion,—they should look well to it how they deal out justice and mercy to others. They allow not the plea of ignorance of the law in those on whom the law lays its iron hand. They excuse not, on the ground of the value of the thing taken, the attempt to take it, if it is connected with their property or pleasure. It was only three or four days ago that the papers reported a case of poaching at the petty session at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, in which three men were charged with having fixed a net on a Sunday, not having a game certificate. This was the offence, but it was got up into four parts. They were first charged with having a net; they were then accused with doing the act on a Sunday; they were then charged with a trespass in the pursuit of game; and they were lastly charged with an assault on the gamekeeper. These three

men were each, in a summary mode, by the magistrates, themselves perhaps interested in this very case, sentenced to a fine of 5*l.* each for three offences out of the four, and 2*l.* each for the remaining offence; and in default of payment, they were sentenced severally to three months' imprisonment for each of the first two offences, and to two months for each of the other offences, making in the whole a fine of 17*l.*, or ten months' imprisonment, for each of these three men. If such is a righteous measure of punishment for desiring to taste the rich man's bird, what should be the measure of punishment for taking by wholesale the poor man's bread? The penalties in that case, I think, ought not to be less heavy than those legally incurred, but which will not fall on the parties who have incurred them, by betting at horse races, which has lately been made the subject of legislation. For penalties do not reach those who were described by one of the members of their own senate as "gentlemen whom this House would not wish to see convicted."

There is another caution I would give our fellow-agitators and conspirators in their new attempt; and that is, to avoid such exhibitions as one which took place the other day at a meeting of the Newton-Abbot Agricultural Society. This was not an Anti-League Association. It was neither more nor less than the annual ploughing match. The high sheriff of the county was present, and a peer and some members of the Lower House formed part of the company. There were thirty-nine ploughs in the field, and men were called upon to contest for various prizes. Amongst other things on the ground was a wagon surmounted with flags, upon one of which was inscribed "Protection to Agriculture," and on each side of this wagon there were three cannons. Such may be the ultimate argument of monopolists, as they have been said to be of sovereigns. It may be that at the present moment, were there not such things as cannons, muskets, and bayonets in the country, the delay of right and justice would not be continued so obstinately as it is. But still, I say, it is not prudent in 30,000 people — for the owners of the land amount to no more—even though the rest of the community may be taxed for the purpose of paying the soldiery to fire artillery,—it is not prudent in the thousands

to remind the millions of such a contest as this. We have better weapons than all the cannons they can muster, whether in ploughing or in fields of battle. There are arms which swords cannot reach, against which military manœuvres are quite harmless. There is a power in society, spread as it were through the atmosphere we breathe, and which an electrical touch may bring down at once with a force that nothing can resist, whatever its array of antique state, or its boast of physical force. They have appealed to that; but I would advise them well to mark the symptoms of public opinion; let them watch the indications of the way the tide is flowing; let them ask where the conversions are.

It was remarked by one of the speakers this evening, that there had not been a single conversion to Free Trade in the House of Commons. Has there been a single conversion to monopoly out of that assembly? Do we not find, even in the ranks of the nobility, that from week to week still some fresh name is announced—all coming from the monopolist camp—giving in their adhesion successively to the cause of Free Trade; showing that opinion is flowing on like the tide, that it cannot ebb, and that its resistless course can only end in the attainment of its object? Let them mark, in another direction, the result of calling any meeting that is open to all comers; let them grow wise by the experience of Somerset, and add to that, by the experience recently gained at Freemasons' Hall. I believe they dare not, in any part of the country, give fair play and have open meetings. Why, they dare not even hold open agricultural meetings, nor trust the tenant-farmers with the expression of different opinions upon the question of Free Trade or monopoly. If they talk of their strength in parliament, let them mark the course of opinion in reference to the legislature; let them note the silence of both Houses on subjects upon which nobody out of parliament is silent; let them observe the contrast which those assemblies present to the feeling out of the House, their silence being only to be accounted for upon the supposition that those who wish to uphold the present system feel that "the least said's the soonest mended;" and that they by no means are in the way to win popularity by being the friends, or saying any thing in favour, of mono-

poly. Let them note, too, the way in which the mention of the legislature is received at public meetings all over the country. I have never been present upon any occasion, at any public meeting, however great the distance from London, where the announcement made this year of the determination of the League not to petition the present House of Commons any more was not received with shouts of responsive acclamation. And is this a wholesome or safe state of things for those who live in a land where the government, if it exist at all, must be based upon public opinion?

There can be no hesitation in the mind of any lover of his country in assenting to the statement that this division of feeling should be abated as soon as possible, and remedied in the only way in which it can be—by conceding the claims of charity and justice, and adopting the policy of those measures which are demanded by the advocates of Free Trade. Here, then, upon the ground now taken by our opponents, we are content to contest the question in future. With them we go to public opinion: as they have appealed to it, by its decision they must abide. We go with them to opinion—the ruler of the world; opinion, which is the breath of the body politic, without which it soon sinks into the death of despotism, or becomes a mass of corruption; opinion, which anticipates the province of history, and which glorifies those whom unjust verdicts may condemn; opinion, which, while it can irradiate the dungeon, strikes cold apprehension into the bosom of the powerful sophist, fearing that in history he may only find himself "damned to everlasting fame;" opinion, which gives its worth to whatever is most highly prized, without which the crown is but wood and velvet, and coronets, mitres, and Georges are worth just as much as they will fetch at the pawnbroker's; opinion, which, when it refers to the great elementary principles of truth and justice, rarely, if ever, mistakes; opinion, to which the monopolists have now appealed, by which they must stand or fall, and which has already pronounced, and does now by your voices pronounce, the Corn Laws a false policy, a base fraud, and an atrocious crime, which ought to be obliterated for ever from the statute-book of this country.

No. IX.

AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE.

March 27th, 1844.

SOME very just observations were made by the honourable member who spoke first this evening upon the undesirableness of taking a one-sided view of a question, and of associating exclusively with those with whom our opinions are identical and our sympathies are strong. But this evil, be it little or much, is almost unavoidable upon the question of the Corn Laws, because, so far as logic is concerned, it is a question which has but one side to it. The Pro-Corn-Law Associations will not admit us at their assemblies, and they will not come to our meetings; we must bear the evil whatever it be, endeavouring to gain a remote point for the contemplation of the subject. I think that an intelligent foreigner, especially if not intimately acquainted with the mechanism of society in this country, who should attend several of these meetings in succession, would be strongly impressed with the conviction that our most sanguine expectations are sure of being realised. In the unprecedented numbers that have been gathered together week after week in this metropolis—in the great assemblage here of persons of all ranks and classes of society—in the voluntary order and harmony of your proceedings—in the interest excited by topics sometimes leading to remote considerations, and strange ones, as they would generally have been deemed, for great public meetings to have addressed to them—in the concurrence of the views which are put forth here with those of the soundest philosophers upon the production and distribution of national wealth; and the response which there is to your opinions and feelings throughout the country, manifested, from time to time, in the most distant counties and towns —and in the determination which is by you and by them evinced never to shrink from the assertion of the principle we hold, nor to abandon or relax in the demand for its practical application,—in all these circumstances, I appre-

hend that such an observer would see evidence that the repeal of the Corn Laws, and all other monopolies, is marked down as the inevitable result.

The same honourable gentleman referred to a time when the country shall be visited by a bad harvest as that which probably would be the date of the abolition of the Corn Laws. It is melancholy to look at the question only in that association. But I would suggest, on the other hand, that some additional element is necessary. We have had bad harvests, and though they have inflicted tremendous suffering on the people, they have led to no reform in our ministerial policy. If there be a cause why, in future, such a dispensation should wear a different aspect from what it has in times gone by—why that which has only been evil shall at some future period become a good and a blessing—I find that modifying clause in another result of the same Providential superintendence, which, whilst it orders the clouds and the winds, and regulates the fertility of the soil, or visits it with barrenness, also stimulates in human hearts a love of justice, an impatience of wrong, and a determination by peaceful but unconquerable perseverance to win from the hands of power the rights and interests of the many.

While the intelligent foreigner whom I am supposing would behold in your assemblages only reasons for expecting the abolition of the food monopoly, he might be induced perchance to visit another place, and breathe a different atmosphere, where no such impression would be conveyed to his mind, but where every symptom which he contemplated would be one of stubborn and dogged resistance to this wise, just, and beneficent measure. And what are the symptoms by which that resistance would manifest itself? As far as we see, on the one hand, the prospect of this repeal shows itself in the frank communication and expression of sentiment—in the heartening one another up for the conflict on behalf of the helpless against the powerful—in the endeavour to carry out to the world, in human institutions, that great provision of nature by which the diversities of all regions are framed to minister to the well-being of every nation. As such are the symptoms by which he would be led to expect this result here, what would he find as existing in the forms and demonstrations of the

opposition—the dead and seemingly impassible resistance —by which that result is opposed? Why, he would find in that place an affected silence upon the subject. He would see a number of persons met together, professedly to consult for the welfare of the nation, where the one topic that occupied the mind and heart of the nation was continually passed over—where, on that momentous question which you have heard here discussed, all voices are mute, none countenancing its being brought forward. No measure tending to relieve the people from the pressure laid upon them in relation to the necessaries of life has as yet found its way, still less has been adopted, there; and we are reminded of the old story of Queen Elizabeth, who, when the parliament had been very sluggish indeed, applied to its speaker—afterwards Mr. Chief-Justice Popham—and said, "Well, Mr. Speaker, what has passed in the House of Commons?" The speaker, with a low bow to her majesty, could only reply, "If it please your majesty, *seven weeks* have passed." Even inquiry is forbidden there! They tell us we do not understand the subject; but assuredly they offer no assistance towards its better comprehension. They complain of the burdens that weigh down the agricultural interest, and render protection necessary; but it is from others that the desire and proposition comes to ascertain what those burdens really are.

Still the inquiry is refused; we are not to be allowed to know what the peculiar pressure is; we must take it all upon trust. They seem to think that examination into these matters would be as perilous to the cause which they wish to uphold as an inquisition with lighted torches would be into the state of a gunpowder manufactory. Yet, meanwhile, assertions are reiterated by their retainers out of doors, and great license is given to their tongues. Statements are made of the conduct, motives, and proceedings of manufacturers and others, which, if they have in them a particle of truth, ought to be put in the most distinct form, and be supported by the clearest evidence. They go on, taking a latitude of speech to which there is no parallel in the proceedings of any other body. They put forth, as you have heard in some quotations to-night, declarations of attempts by manufacturers to excite, to oppress, and to enrage the people of this country, which are so unsubstan-

tial and devoid of all verisimilitude, that if this work goes on much longer, their speeches will pass into a proverb: we shall talk of the mendacity of monopoly, and it will become a familiar saying of any one grossly regardless of the truth,—"He lies like a Pro-Corn-Law lord." Connected with this affected silence there is a pretended bustle on trivial and unimportant matters. Resolutions are passed, going in one direction one night, and in another direction another night. There is great talk of humanity, with little appearance of solid advantages to be bestowed on the community. They march up the hill, then down again, and remind us of Dr. Young's description of the impenitent sinner, who, after suspecting himself a fool,

"Resolves, and re-resolves, then dies the same."

In the course of these proceedings, the great sensation of the session appears to have been an allusion to that memorable character in history, Jack Cade. This has acted so strongly, that I think it would be well worth while if a select committee of country gentlemen were appointed to inquire into the history and principles of "Mr. Cade," as he is now more respectfully termed. They would find very much in them that might be instructive, with this impartiality, that it would have a bearing on both sides of the question. In the authentic chronicles of Shakespeare we find a leading principle of Cade's followers to have been that "the members of the royal council were no good workmen." That, perhaps, may be thought not inapplicable to some recent displays of the statesmanship of the present cabinet. Cade was a great regulator: he meddled with business which he did not understand; and yet in that interference, perhaps, his disposition was not the worst, or the most vicious, this country has witnessed. He declared that seven halfpenny loaves should be sold in London for a penny; and this would not have been a worse law than others, which enact that only six halfpenny loaves shall be sold for fourpence. Cade was met by an embassy, in which the Duke of Buckingham of the day was the ambassador. That nobleman said he found him in his answers a very discreet person; but, notwithstanding this recommendation, the Duke abandoned him to treachery, which resulted in his execution; and thus ended the first alliance

between the Dukes of Buckingham and those who attempted to disturb the country and excite riot and confusion. Cade is said to have built a chimney; but we are not told that it was a tall one. He was evidently no factory man. He came from that county which, in our own day, has been rendered famous by the eloquence of a Bradshaw; adorned by the divinity of a Molesworth, the divine mission of a Thom; blessed with the refined gentleness of a Winchilsea, and honoured with the legislative impartiality and frankness of a Knatchbull. There are many historic doubts about this same Cade. Upon the authority of contemporary chroniclers, it has been said that this was only an assumed name; that he was, in reality, a doctor, and that, like some other state empirics, he would not prescribe until he was "called in." By such tricks he got himself prematurely called in, and then found himself in such an awkward scrape by the dissatisfaction of the different parties with whom he was in collision, that he would have been very glad indeed to get out of it with a whole skin, if he could have done so.

But no wonder that matters even of this incidental kind can attract attention and excite interest in the House of Commons, when, as we were informed by what is professed to be a report of a speech of Lord Stanley last night, the great question of all—the Corn Laws—is deemed by him one of "infinite importance and infinite delicacy;" so much so, that it is scarcely safe to whisper about it, lest the great agricultural interest should become alarmed, and betake itself to the extravagancy of a panic! It seems there are two reasons against legislating upon the importation of foreign corn, both of them alike conclusive. It is not to be legislated for in some countries, because they can send corn; and not to be legislated for in others, because they have none whatever to send. These are held to be sufficient reasons for maintaining the law in its present state, and for saving the landlords from a panic. But are they really so tender upon the point as all this? May it not be that there is yet a further reason for this sensitiveness than any mere apprehension that an influx of Indian corn—for there are no Tamboffs* in India—could possibly

* Much ridicule was excited about this time by a geographical blunder of Lord Stanley (now Earl Derby) as to the situation of

create in their minds? Is it not rather from the circumstance that the power which has made the government, will not allow them to tamper with even the show of alteration in these laws? Is it not more likely that the ministers are held strictly to their allegiance,—that it is not a panic of the landowners, but of the cabinet,—a fear on the part of the government lest those who brought it into being, and who boast that they could, with equal ease, destroy it, should take offence at any relaxation of their policy. If this be so, the ministry are in a state of most unhappy subjugation and degrading dependency for an administration in a country like this, where so much sympathy has been shown for slavery of all kinds,—for the negroes under the lash, and even for those who work by their free consent in factories,—where there is so much sympathy with all kinds of subjugation. Why, surely it would be desirable, looking at this state of things, to make some exertions, and to have voluntary associations for the emancipation of her majesty's ministers.

In these various indications, an attentive looker-on would see the different forms and phases of the obstinate resistance to our principles which we have still to encounter. We might ask, How is this opposition to truth and justice to be maintained? Where are its powers, and what its strength? One House would meet his eye composed of landowners,—not with all their estates free, and their receipts in full,—but still, the class to which they belong being hereditary legislators, some of whom have won battles, others whose grandfathers, by worse tricks even than by winning battles, gained their places there, and formed a legislative body whose capacity for law-making is presumed to descend from generation to generation. Then he would look at the other assembly, over which he would find the former exercising considerable influence.

We look with full earnestness of purpose to the constituencies of the country in reference to this elective body. But there have been some recent returns as to what those constituencies are, illustrative of the relation that they bear to the possessors of landed property. We find that in

Tamboff, a central government of European Russia, which alarmed the protectionists on account of its growth of corn.

England four-sevenths of the entire constituency are county voters; of this number one-fourth of the whole vote as 50*l.* tenants-at-will. In Wales the county voters are differently divided, and the tenants-at-will form an actual majority. Of the 320,000—to speak in round numbers—borough voters in England, upwards of 130,000 belong to the classes of freemen, liverymen, scot-and-lot voters, and pot-wallopers. There is throughout the whole electoral body a large mass of individuals capable of being acted upon by the most corrupt influences, and of the exercise of which there is so frequently positive proof. Then the direct power of command is enforced by the indirect. It spreads through the whole of society: the screw is turned upon one man, who is obliged to pursue the same process with his neighbour. Men in the loftiest station are not ashamed of being parties to proceedings of this kind. Only a few days ago a fact was reported in the *Morning Chronicle*, which is only one of a thousand of an analogous description which are continually occurring, but which, to an observant foreigner, would throw some light upon the strength of monopoly and upon the landed aristocracy in this country. The circumstance to which I allude is thus stated—it relates to a cabinet minister:

"In a county which has acquired much reputation for the agricultural skill of its farmers, there was lately advertised one of the minister's farms to be let by proposal. There were various offerers; but one higher than the others was admitted to a special interview with the landlord's agent, who, being satisfied with the means of the offerer, and the respectability of his character, seemed upon the point of deciding in his favour, until the following and concluding conversation occurred: *Agent.* 'Of what politics are you?' *Offerer.* 'A Liberal.' *Agent.* 'Of what religious persuasion?' *Offerer.* 'A Dissenter.' *Agent.* 'But the tenant of this farm must both go to church and poll with his landlord.' *Offerer.* 'Then, sir, I am not prepared to bid a higher rent than any one else, and have to sacrifice my religious and political principles, merely to gratify your master's lust for power. Good morning, sir.'"

It is more than probable that such occurrences as the above are not uncommon, and if the persons to whom they happen would only publish them through the medium of

the press, Englishmen would be made to blush for suffering this great country to be ruled by such tyrants as these. But so it is: the parties with whom we have to deal appear to think that a species of omniscience is communicated by the possession of landed property; that the landowners have a right to determine how a man shall act, politically and religiously. They are continually exercising this interference over those who have the misfortune to be their dependents. They say to all other parties, in the words of Campbell:

> "We know all about God Almighty,
> A thousand times better than you."

They even lay down the law as to the course which is to be taken by their tenants in sending children to school. A few days before this paragraph appeared, the same paper had a report of a Dissenting school being entirely put down, after it had been carried on in a most meritorious manner by a man in humble circumstances for many years. In fact, they seem disposed to realise the dictum of one of the Scotch judges who presided at the trial of Muir and Palmer, who declared from the bench that "no man had a right even to speak of the constitution unless he possessed landed property."

Here, then, is a power which may long resist the force of public opinion. But what will be the consequence of that obstinacy? Is it possible for such a feeling to exist as has been evinced in the many meetings held here, and which prevails to so large an extent throughout the country, which is seen in the strong conviction and determination which millions and millions of our countrymen entertain on this subject, and that no effects should result from such a collision? Is it at all likely that the unhappy influence of the Corn Laws on the condition of multitudes should not produce its results also in the limitation of manufacturing industry, in the failure of one market after another, in the alternation, as the seasons vary, of commercial and agricultural distress? We see suffering more deep than charitable societies or mitigated Poor Laws will ever be able to reach; we behold a gigantic and yet growing evil, which sooner or later must be grappled with, and that, too, by a statesmanship which is equal to the achievement of the largest commercial reform that any

country perhaps has ever yet experienced. For what else can or is to be done? There is a talk of emigration, of exporting a portion of the people of this country to other lands. We do not send our horses away; or, if we do it, it is at a high price; showing the esteem which is set upon their worth. That useful animal does not go about neighing, by way of petition for work, to any human being who will oblige him in that way; he is too valuable for that. But let the animal only walk on two legs instead of four,—let him but have what has been called the "human face divine," and be capable of looking up with high aspirations,—let him have a brain where thought works with its mighty energies, and possess a heart beating with affections,—let him be the possessor of a strong arm,—and still all these may not avail him; he must go about seeking for work, and perhaps after all be told, that though the horse is valuable, man is worthless, and the best thing to be done with him is to send him out of the country.

There was a time when human beings were told by the Highest Authority, that they were "of more value than many sparrows." But even this can scarcely be said now. Sparrows are worth something in country parts—they put them into puddings; but we have not yet got to pauper-pies; and those of our population who are neither wanted for their work, nor are good for eating, why, it seems to be thought but one thing is to be done with them, and that is, to cast them overboard out of the vessel of the community. Were this hopeful idea capable of being carried out—to do which there has been a disposition evinced—those who might enrich our land by their toil—who might, in earning their own means of subsistence, provide for the support and the gratification of others, even though those others should dwell in distant regions,—would, if such a policy were wrought out, be driven, as it were, in shoals to our coasts, there to be shipped off; bound, some for the Cape—not of "Good Hope," but of hope most forlorn—some for Canada, others for Australia; and some—looking at the manner in which emigration and transport-ships are too frequently sent forth—some, perhaps, for eternity; startling the depths of the ocean by the unexpected invasion of a colony of emaciated corpses.

It is said that the country is making strides in de-

moralisation. What hold can spiritual teachers have of a people who are obliged to battle earnestly for the right of being allowed to earn the means of subsistence? What favourable hearing can they expect, against whom the laws preach another gospel—the gospel of starvation—as opposed to theirs of freedom and plenty; denying them the daily bread which it is inculcated in their Bible that they should ask of Heaven? Less and less must be the influence of Christian teachers as this erroneous and degrading policy manifests its full depravity; and smaller and smaller the power of instructors of every kind. Eating is the condition of learning; under all circumstances it must precede that work. The people must be fed and clothed before you can expect that the mind will be exercised, the taste cultivated, and the character formed. One of the worst features of this worn-out feudal policy—and it is even a compliment to call it feudal, for it is much more sordid than any thing in ancient feudalism—is, that it not only wages war against man's physical support and comfort, but also against the *morale* of the country; exercising a deadly influence against education, and the enlightenment of civilisation itself. If its whole result be accomplished, it will tend to turn back the future ages into periods of barbarism; to overspread the land with an untutored banditti, repaying the vindictive and selfish lessons which they have learned from example. It will open before us—as the result of oppression continued and reform denied, as through a long vista perhaps, but yet distinct in its remoteness at the end of that perspective—the blazing and roaring volcano of revolution.

Foolish people are the aristocracy of this country to abuse and sneer at the Anti-Corn-Law League! Why, that body stands between them and ruin. The League interposes and shields them from such hatred and execration as no class of men, one would think, would willingly abide the pelting of. It excites hope in minds that would otherwise be driven to desperation. There is a prospect in its peaceful, firm, and decided advance; there is a means provided for the readjustment of society, the restoration of harmony between class and class, the healing of wounds that have festered into bitterness, and the reconciliation of interests that for the present are put into the utmost

extremes of animosity and incongruity. For all this they should thank the League, rely upon it, and make speedy terms with it; the only terms which are to be made being, that the aristocracy should serve us, and in the end serve themselves, by the total abolition of their infamous monopoly.

I say the Corn Law is a warfare against civilisation, a wanton abuse by the landowners of their legislational power; for when and where in the world's history has civilisation ever advanced but in connection with the humanising and harmonising influences of commercial intercourse? To whom do we, to whom does the world, owe its first alphabet, but to those adventurous merchants, the Phœnicians? There is a sort of cant about the instability of commerce; why, Tyre lasted in its glory seven hundred years. It was their free intercourse that gave the polished Athenians all their superiority over the rough and rude Spartans. In the middle ages, the republics of Italy, while they kept alive some notion of political freedom, did it in connection with the extensiveness of their commercial intercourse. Their princely merchants founded at once the civilisation and the wealth of succeeding periods. In the great start which Europe took at the time of the Reformation, we behold the same alliance. Every where the merchant, the burgess, or the tradesman, is seen making good his position in society, raising the whole community, and, as he did so, elevating those very feudal lords themselves. For what were they then, or what would they have been now, but for the benignant influence of commerce? But for that, these very persons who deny the labourer the food he has earned of the foreigner, while they surround themselves with all the luxuries which they can accumulate from the most distant regions, instead of being seated in their richly carpeted rooms, would have been walking upon their rush-strewn floors, immured in their cold, stony residences, more like dungeons than any thing else, with their unglazed windows letting in the rain and sleet as well as the breath and air of heaven. They would have been to this day still sanctioning the charters of some mercantile guild, by affixing their marks to the documents instead of writing their names; and have been about as well informed of the distant countries over whose destinies they now

exercise so large an influence, as those same feudal barons were when they set out upon their Christian expedition to Palestine, expecting to find in that country that they should have to encounter giants riding on unicorns, black magicians who breakfasted by sucking phœnix' eggs, and griffins and dragons as plentiful as barn-door fowls.

Why, it is commerce which has made men of the aristocracy. Poor and beggarly is the boon which is asked of them in return—to allow even the humblest of those who labour in what is really the work that Providence has given to men to do for each other—to allow them the free interchange of the results of their toil, from whatever region the payment may come by which that toil is to be recompensed. And if laws for the restriction of commerce are an absurdity under any circumstances, and a wickedness as well as an absurdity, much more are they both in such a country as this. Why, this island was made for commerce: it is marked out for it by the hand of Heaven itself! Creative Power has stamped that destiny upon it by our long lines of coast, our beautiful rivers, safe harbours, and all those circumstances which indicate Britain as the central point from which every wind that blows should waft some freight of wealth, knowledge, or charity to the remotest regions of the globe. It has been marked out for commerce by its coal-beds and mineral treasures,—by the materials which Nature puts into the hands of man, which seem of themselves to invite the application of his power, and say, "Come and use us! elicit the virtue that we possess, and our gigantic power to minister to the luxuries of millions, and to feed and clothe millions and millions more." The industry and unwearied toil, the accumulated capital, the surpassing skill and science of this land, the eminence it has already attained,—all show that these are the conquests which we have to make. This is our mission from heaven for the universal benefit of mankind upon God's earth; and who or what are the landed class, that they should stand up and interpose, saying, "This shall not be done; for it will deteriorate our property, and lower our rents"? Why, suppose it should; is there any thing in a class which has had for ages immense advantages over all the rest of society suffering a little inconvenience? Is there any thing in the result of a right-

ful change subjecting them, were it so, to temporary privation, that should in honesty allow them to stand in the way of the accomplishment of that which humanity has a right to claim, to which charity and justice alike award their sacred sanction? Could they permanently divert this land from its proper work, and succeed in upholding for ever laws which would cripple the manufactures and commerce by which we have been enriched, which have made the strength and greatness of the nation,—could they go on successfully repressing these, keeping down the ebullition of misery, and suppressing all indications of discontent,—could they, through coming years, uphold their present policy to its full extent, and realise—which they are far from being able to do—the purposes for which their monopoly laws are enacted,—what disastrous results would take place from end to end of this country! With a growing population and a declining trade,—the ports barred against the foreigner by duties,—disease and famine would stalk abroad; frightful demoralisation would ensue; the iron arm of power must then be put forth to keep down the millions; they must make a solitude, and call it peace,—such peace as there would be thus obtained would be the peace of the churchyard, where every arm is nerveless, every heart cold, and all are mouldering fast into one mass of corruption. The land would be partitioned into squirearchies, and each rural tyrant would stalk in the solitary majesty of self-assumption over his petty domain; the peasant would think it a great prize when he got a sound potato; and intellect and the arts, and every thing which refines and softens life, would leave a country thus degraded and abandoned; it would become so fearful a spectacle, that we should cry, "O God of heaven! sooner than this, let Britain be whelmed again in the ocean from which it first arose,—let it find a worthier grave there, than that the long annals of its glory should end in a state of things so infamous and disgusting!"

We are not, then, fighting a manufacturer's question, or pleading only for charity to the poor; we are asserting the common, the great right of humanity, and advocating an interest which is not merely a pecuniary question of a passing day, but the interest of human nature in all countries and ages. Our cause is the advance of civilisa-

tion itself; it is for that we strive. We are struggling that the world's progress may not be turned back through our indifference under the infliction of these mischievous wrongs. It is a sacred cause, and one which will call forth the most enthusiastic feelings of our hearts, and the intensest devotion of our souls. It is a matter which ought to be before us day and night,—from month to month and year to year,—until the result which we contemplate is obtained. Oh, that it were regarded in all its importance by those whose station gives them ampler means of leading on that result! for should the sovereign of these realms have moments of perplexity and anxiousness, and be distracted by conflicting councils,—looking wistfully on the battles of warring statesmen,—should she at such moments desire to know what it is that would make her reign blessed, as wiping away the tears of the distressed, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, and raising those that are trampled down,—should she desire to know what it is that would render her reign illustrious, not only by averting misery and rectifying wrong, but which would give it a yet higher splendour, before which the glories of conquest, legislative institutions, and reformations in former times would all wax pale in comparison,—should she desire to know what the magic is that would render her reign an era in the world's history, and the best and brightest in the annals of Great Britain,—oh, that some good angel would whisper in her ear that the talismanic words to do all this are—Commercial Freedom!

No. X.

AT BRISTOL.*

April 12, 1844.

My Lord Ducie, in opening this meeting, has — if I may be allowed on the part of this meeting, as well as on my own, to say so—greatly underrated his own powers as an advocate in this great cause. I, for one, have been exceedingly interested and instructed by the exposition which he has just given us. I am instructed by it as coming from such authority; as being the testimony of a noble landowner whose charges are all paid, and one, therefore, which bears down the whole mass of testimony from landowners whose charges are not paid, who are only the nominal proprietors of the broad acres over which they profess to have the mastery, who have to meet the difficulties of mortgages and marriage-settlements, and who tax the country to enable themselves to meet those difficulties. But it is not only the testimony of the noble lord which is valuable; his arguments are so in an equal degree. With the economical part of the question he has fairly grappled. He has taken that part of the Anti-Corn-Law League's reasoning where it was supposed to be the weakest, and he has shown its power and strength. He has touched on the most important part of the whole subject. He has shown the substantial good which the League has effected; that good which will endure when the Corn Laws are matter of history; that good which is beyond all economical good; that good which springs from arousing the mind of the country, calling forth its spirit and independence, without which prosperity itself is a mere transitory enjoyment, and without which freedom is only an empty name. Whether we achieve or do not achieve our objects, the League has conferred upon the country a substantial good where it was most needed. It has taught the people a lesson which they will not forget,—it has led them to the exercise of their rational powers,—it has sent information like light beaming over the surface of the

* From the *Bristol Mercury*.

country, and called forth its energies, its principles, and its patriotism,—it has made the electors feel the solemn and sacred responsibility which rests upon them,—and it has taught the non-electors how to use that power which they possess—the power of public opinion. Whenever the history of this struggle shall be written, it will be found that it contained the germ of other reforms, that it paved the way for the broad march of improvement which must flow in its track. Whatever is humane and benevolent—whatever is true, good, right, and just—whatever tends to the advance of humanity, makes light on earth lighter and more benignant—is only to be obtained by opening up to every individual the sources of knowledge and freedom, and showing to society the high destinies which civilisation has yet to offer.

Your noble chairman in his opening address has touched upon all the leading points of this important question, and shown the continued succession of jeers, suspicions, and denunciations which have been vented against the League, as if it were so strange a thing that a good object should commend itself to honest minds, call forth their energies, and lead them to coöperation with others. If there is any thing more extraordinary than this agitation itself, it is that the necessity for it should be allowed to exist. Why are we compelled to leave our homes and our household enjoyments? why are we forced to meet month after month, and year after year? why all this toil and sacrifice, this outlay of money, this expenditure of mind? Have we not Houses of Lords and Commons, and municipal institutions? Why is all this necessary for a matter so plain and simple as the right of the tradesman to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market, for the right of the labourer to exchange the produce of his toil for the bread which he has fairly earned by the sweat of his brow? If there is any thing more extraordinary than the necessity for this agitation, it is the cause of it—the limitation of the trade of this country, the tax which is put upon the food of the labouring population. If there is any thing more extraordinary still, it is that this attempt to remedy the evil—an attempt caused by the backwardness of the legislature to do so—should be met by scorns and scoffs and calumny. What would they have us to do? We have

been compelled to agitate; they have driven us to it. If the Duke of Richmond thinks that this country should not be troubled by agitation, let him do us justice. The matter has been long before the country; every educated man knows the *pros* and *cons* of it. Every great writer on the science, from Adam Smith down to Colonel Thompson, has borne witness to the great truth, that Free Trade is to the interest of a community, and especially of such a community as that of Great Britain. Have not appeals been made to the legislature by all the well-informed merchants of the country? was there not a famous petition from London twenty years ago? have not petitions innumerable been poured in from the great masses of the community? were they not multiplied last session? did not a million and a quarter of petitioners humbly approach the legislative bodies, and beg from them as a boon to the labourer that which was his undoubted right? What would they have us to do?—would they have us to rebel? would they have us plead our cause with the musket? We are rather too well instructed for that nowadays. We know of a power which the musket cannot exert, and which, thanks be to Heaven, the musket cannot resist,—a power which cannot be put down by cannon or bayonet —the power of opinion pervading society, and which will have its way, and will wring its rights from reluctant power, while that power itself will be only mentioned by the future historian as being disgraced, from the very fact of its having been so long reluctant in this matter.

The *Times* of this morning reads a great moral lesson to the League. The great journal reads the "Great Fact" a great moral lesson. The first objection of the *Times* is, that the League and its leaders are concerned in manufactures, that they are cotton-spinners and calico-printers, and it is wonderful how such men have become the world's talk. The *Times* forgets, in using this language, that the present condition of society is not as it was years ago, when certain political cliques managed affairs, whilst the millions stood looking on in mindless acquiescence; the course of events, though in a more peaceful way than in other countries, has called forth talent from all ranks and classes. As in revolutionary France the marshals of her empire, who carried the tricolour in triumph over the world, came not

from those trained in arms, not from those high in station and influence, but were found in all classes, whether from among the post-house or the pot-house, the tradesman's shop or the lawyer's clerk; so in this question, which has so deeply stirred and interested the public mind, men, even though they may be cotton-spinners, have come forth and exhibited an intellect, a comprehensive power of mind, not to be found amongst the oldest political statesmen of the day. The *Times* talks of the cotton grub. What is a grub? The germ of the winged insect, that in time to come shall soar into the air, the type of the human soul and its immortality. So the intellect which the agitation of this question has called forth, has attracted the gaze and commanded the admiration of the world. We have a prime minister who is the son of a cotton-spinner; and why may not another cotton-spinner appear who shall have the power to grapple with this important question? The world advances rapidly, and a cotton-spinner of to-day may do that which the son of a cotton-spinner has been unable to accomplish. It is not by cramming with Latin and Greek at the university that you make statesmen. Other wisdom than what is taught there must be learnt. Had the son of a certain cotton-spinner not been so crammed, had he not drunk at that fountain from whence the waters of bitterness have too often flowed, he would not, at his entrance into life, have opposed what he afterwards granted—the great act of religious freedom—and would, instead of gaining from his former colleagues the brand of apostasy, have won for himself the crown of patriotism.

But I must go on a little further with this great moral lesson to our leaders. There are some points in it in which I really, entirely, and heartily coincide, because I believe they contain great truths well expressed. Such as the following: "A great cause as often makes little men as it makes great men." So far, so good—this cause is a great cause. The lesson then goes on to inquire, "For whom and for what do they ask that the country should run the risks, for risks, at least, there are involved, in a greater freedom of trade? For whom and for what do they ask that important items of the revenue should be surrendered, and the vested interests of the land should be endangered? For themselves only, or for the whole nation, themselves in-

cluded? It is their scheme of a blessed futurity, that they are to build new mills, create new manufacturing cities, dig new docks, lay down new railways, enlarge their mansions into palaces, and their pleasure-grounds into parks, add town houses to country houses, and ally themselves to the much-hated, much-envied aristocracy; while all this time the operative, the mother of a family, the squalid youth, the sickly girl, are to go on standing at the spindles for ever, winter and summer, from half-past five in the morning—by the inexorable mill clock—to seven in the evening." And then the writer proceeds to say that the League has been miserably slow to recognise the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of women and young persons chained to the steam-engine, &c. That the League has been miserably slow to recognise the condition of the poor of this country, I beg leave to deny. I know of no philanthropy more substantial than giving to man the power of improving his own condition, by laying the best foundation for his advance. It is not by saying to a man, You shall not work, it is not by saying that the steam-engine shall not work, that you will add to his comforts. I feel as strongly as any man that women and children have claims on the world for protection, legal protection if it be necessary—throw the broad shield of public opinion and the law between the strong and the weak; but let me say that the labouring population would not need protection for their wives and children—they would be able to protect themselves—were it not for the monopolists' tax on their food, and which drives them to tasks that are abhorrent to the feelings of all. The advocates for protection overlook this fact, and it is only the League which has looked the matter fully in the face. There is no other mode of grappling with the evil. To abridge a man's power to work, and thus to lower his wages, whilst you subject his food to an impost, is what I can call not only a one-sided, but a most abominable policy. It is because the leaders of the League have put this question on broad principles, have made it, not a manufacturer's question, but the question of the people of Great Britain, that they have commanded so much sympathy, and will so certainly triumph.

The *Times* speaks of the factory people as the most wretched under heaven; and the *Morning Herald* asks

with great *naïveté*, if a family in Mr. Bright's employ earn 1*l.* 19*s.* 6*d.* a week, supposing the legislature to reduce their wages by limiting their labour, could they not live on 1*l.* 9*s.* 9*d.*? Is that the philanthropy of this friend to humanity? Is that the way questions affecting the mass of the people of this country should be put? Are there no people working hard but those employed in factories? Have there not lately appeared statements of horrors in other places, and amongst other people, to which the history of Lancashire has nothing to put in comparison? I was reading some weeks ago, in the *Westminster Review*, a notice of an autobiography, as yet unpublished, of a man who is distinguished for his poetical writings, and who at one time suffered the greatest distress. He was an Aberdeen weaver. Business fell off, and he was driven to try his fortune as a pedlar, with his wife and children. One of them was dying under a hedge; shelter was sought at a farm, and refused; and in the bitterness of his heart the father writes: "My head throbbed with pain, and for a time became the tenement of thoughts I would not now reveal. They partook less of sorrow than of indignation, and it seemed to me that this same world was a thing very much to be hated; and, on the whole, the sooner that one like me could get out of it, the better for its sake and my own. I felt myself, as it were, shut out from mankind—enclosed, prisoned in misery; no outlook—none! My miserable wife and little ones, who alone cared for me—what would I not have done for their sakes at that hour! Here let me speak out—and be heard, too, while I tell it—that the world does not at all times know how unsafely it sits: when Despair has loosed Honour's last hold upon the heart—when transcendent Wretchedness lays weeping Reason in the dust—when every unsympathising looker-on is deemed an enemy—who then can limit the consequences? For my own part, I confess that, ever since that dreadful night, I can never hear of an extraordinary criminal without the wish to pierce through the mere judicial view of his career, under which, I am persuaded, there would often be found to exist an unseen impulse—a chain with one end fixed in Nature's holiest ground, that drew him on to his destiny."* Such are the

* The autobiography alluded to by Mr. Fox was afterwards published in a work entitled *Rhymes and Recollections of a Handloom*

people; and there are hundreds of thousands enduring like this man, whom Free Trade—by cheapening the means of subsistence and giving them employment—would render the stay and prop of the country, instead of their being as now the occasion of peril to life and property.

There have been some accusations uttered against the League, at a meeting which was held in this city about a fortnight ago, at the White Lion in Broad Street, of the Agricultural Protection Society. It is stated that many of the influential gentlemen of the surrounding country were present—that they were not all there we have good evidence to-night. The chairman, Mr. J. S. Harford, made it one of the chief objects of his speech to bring accusations against the Anti-Corn-Law League; but I will say for him, that his speech is marked with an unusual spirit of moderation. He does not accuse us of some of the atrocious crimes

Weaver, by William Thom of Inverury. The passage cited is printed as it stands in the second edition of that work, published by Smith, Elder, and Co., 1845. On the night alluded to, admission was at length obtained by Thom and his family at the farmhouse of John Cooper West-town of Kinnaird, by whom they were hospitably received. The sick child, Jeanie, died during the night from the effects of exposure. Some time after this an elegant poem, called the "Blind Boy's Pranks," appeared in the *Aberdeen Herald*, with the signature "A Serf." The writer was William Thom. Mr. Gordon of Knockespock sent him 5*l*. through the editor of the journal, and after making minute inquiries into his character, position, &c., rendered him further assistance. While in London, Thom was a frequent guest at the house of Mr. Fox. The simplicity and earnestness of his character attracted affection and respect wherever he was known. The first edition of *Rhymes and Recollections* met with an excellent reception, to which Mr. Fox in no small degree contributed; and in the second edition Thom wrote: "I would just allude to certain matters resulting from the first edition of this little book. For its success and the good things that followed, my prime thanks are due to the public press. It, with little exception, exhibited the best portions of my book, with the best effect. Above all, they found in my narrative and song a text from which they worked a powerful and enduring sympathy towards the trade-stricken, whose sorrows and shiftings are but too fully told in my own experiences. That same is no mean reward. A selfish and personal pity *was never sought for by me*—nor had I a single wish all the while beyond the utterance of my private feelings, and the pleasure such utterance affords to a stifled and unregarded suffering. I made *no* appeal. Yet there have arisen many friends willing to see me above the chances of again tasting the evils I attempted to describe. From these friends I have received a sufficiency to make good a beginning."

which, with great glibness and in the most liberal manner, have been imputed to us at some meetings. He does not assume that Mr. Cobden goes about with pistols to Drummondise people. He does not insinuate that your noble chairman steals out at night to set fire to wheat-ricks. He does not denounce us all as so many Jack Cades. His charges are brought temperately, and in comparatively mild language; and for that reason they are perhaps entitled to more notice. He told the meeting they were all concerned to uphold the great interest of agriculture; and it was only when that was prosperous that manufactures could flourish. To this I have nothing to object, except that the question is represented as being of "one" of these great interests. In my view it is not a question of this or that great interest, but of one common interest. It is not a question for Whig and Tory to battle out in the legislature. It is not a question to have a grand field-day upon, and then afterwards to compromise away, when interest or ambition requires it, and so leave the people in a worse condition than before. I have no patience with the way in which political questions have been fought out. After years of controversy, we have seen a statesman, who called another the greatest fool and beast in the world, join hands with him, take the fool to his councils and the beast to his arms. It is not a subject to be compromised in this way. It is not a class question at all. It is a question of humanity to the millions who are without those proper means of subsistence which every human being ought to enjoy. It is a question of policy; of that policy which has made the country great, which has raised her, enabled her to overcome her difficulties, and which, if unchecked, will open the way to yet more brilliant prosperity. It is a question of common justice to all, justice to the whole human family, to whom Providence has given the dominion over all things, in order that from His munificence His creatures might derive subsistence and enjoyment.

Mr. Harford goes on to say that he and his friends acted merely on the defensive. Now, it is very benevolent in these gentlemen to speak of their own rents and their own land as being only held for the good of the labourer, and to deprecate the effect which a reduction in price would have on the cultivation of the soil. How stands the ques-

tion of price as respects the labourer? Tables have been compiled, which I have consulted, and which trace the matter of agricultural labour as far back as possible, and which also show the prices of corn for the same periods. Instead of showing that the labourer's wages have been lowered by a reduction in the price of corn, nothing can be more directly opposed to it. The maximum of the labourer's wages, as represented in pints of wheat, was when the price of wheat was the lowest. In the fifteenth century wheat was 4*s.* 10*d.* per quarter, and the wages of the labourer were represented by 199 pints; at the end of the century wheat was at 15*s.* 9*d.*, and the labourer's wages only 82 pints. Corn had trebled in price, but wages had fallen one-half. From the end of the sixteenth century to the beginning of the next, corn rose to double the price—to 37*s.*—and wages fell to 46 pints: another reduction of nearly one-half, accompanied by a double rise in the price. It was similar in the seventeenth century—when wheat fell, wages rose. The same contrast was exhibited in the succeeding century. In 1752 wheat was at 32*s.*, and the labourer earned only 96 pints per week; at another period wheat was at 60*s.*, and the labourer's wages fell off to 70 pints. But the most complete proof is exhibited in the present century. In 1803 wheat was at 91*s.* 8*d.*, and the labourer's wages only 46 pints. Through the whole succession of tables the same contrast is shown. So much for high prices affording protection to the agricultural labourer.

But Mr. Harford says he does not wish that we should wrest from him the moderate protection he enjoys. As if the League were robbers, and wanted to deprive him of his property! Is there any vested interest in taxation? Has any class of men a vested interest in the burdens the legislature lays on the people? Can they have a property in the money which is in our own pockets,—a vested interest in the labourer's property, which is his labour? If they have that, then indeed are they the masters, and the labourers their slaves. But the League, he says, is very tyrannous. He accuses it of violence, of tyranny, of endeavouring to make the House of Commons a close borough, and to fill it only with their myrmidons. Has the League ever threatened—as a certain peer did—to put his black footman into the House? The League has ever put for-

ward as candidates men whose talents, whose principles, and whose worth will stand a comparison with that of any in the country. Has the League ever attempted bribery or even treating? Is it not owing to their proclamations, issued against bribery, that corrupting the people is now made more difficult than ever? Violence! tyranny! oppression! despotism!—strange words these for men who have no arguments but those which liberty and free discussion furnish; who have sought but to enlighten the mind and persuade the will. That tyranny! that oppression! If it is so, that tyranny is the tyranny of reason, and that despotism the despotism of demonstration.

But then Mr. Harford professes to be greatly annoyed at our insulting the aristocracy of the country; that we should go so far as to fix the brand of tyranny, of oppression, on the flower of the English nobility! I see no brand on the brow of the noble earl. Whenever the flower of our nobility—and I believe they best deserve the name—have shown, as he has, their sympathy with the wants, and their determination to maintain the rights, of the people, they have been welcomed by the League to their very hearts, and our friends have been glad to look up to them as our leaders. Is there a hand that would be raised against their property? Is there a heart that does not rejoice that they fill stations which make their worth conspicuous; which does not delight itself with the thought that it is their lot, their right, and their privilege,

> "The applause of list'ning senates to command,
> The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
> To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
> And read their history in a nation's eyes"?

Fix a brand on them! We invite them; in the fulness of burning hearts, we call on the Westminsters, the Radnors, and the Ducies to lead us on to conquest, and we will twine for them the noblest wreath that ever graced the brow of a patriot. Throughout the breadth and length of the land, when the ear hears them it shall bless them; for they will have made the widow's heart to sing for joy, and the blessing of those who were ready to perish shall rest upon them.

Throughout the whole course, the proceedings of the

League have been marked by a rigid adherence to the question, and it has been made matter of accusation by the *Times* that the League has been ready to accept the support even of those interests which are thought not to be in the closest affinity to it. But it is not a conquest of class over class that we wish. We strive for Free Trade for the benefit of the whole community. And how many recollections and feelings throng on us to urge us on! How great the responsibility which rests on every elector to endeavour by his votes to carry it into legislative effect! How vast the obligations on those who have not the franchise, to make the force of public opinion felt! How much there is to recommend to every man the exhortation of our chairman,—to enrol himself as a member, to give his subscription to advance the cause, and to facilitate the great struggle which is going on! When he thinks of the benefits to be achieved, and whose steps he is following in, he will be eager to help forward the great cause. "I shall never forget Paisley," said Sir Robert Peel, "with its 15,000 men out of work,—men able and willing to work, but dependent on charity." Sir Robert Peel ought never to forget it; for if it had not been for his dilatory system, there never would have been families reduced to live on rotten potatoes, and beg from the chandler's shops the refuse of the herring-brine to give them something of a relish; whilst each successive day added but another to another stage to their wretchedness. Oh, may he not forget, but so remember as to give him heart and courage to shake off the fetters of the aristocratical faction by which he is bound, and of the monopolist class who use him as a tool even while they despise him; and, breaking away from them, earn for himself a niche in history! May he have the moral courage, in defiance of corrupt influence, to do justice, and to identify himself with the greatest advance that this country will ever have made in the longest period of its history!

In every view—direct or indirect—which can be taken, the Anti-Corn-Law League is entitled to your support. It is so entitled for having brought into exercise the intelligence and intellect of the country; for having taught to listening thousands the lessons of truth, of knowledge, and of science; for having placed the advocacy of its principles on the broadest basis, and for having pursued

as its policy the plan marked out by Providence itself, which has given to the different regions of the earth different products, that the necessities of the one might be furnished from the superfluities of the other. We appeal to you, as the grand jury of the electors of the country, and ask at your hands a verdict in favour of that body by whom so much has been already achieved, and by whose ultimate success thousands of other blessings will be procured. For these reasons, I hold that the League is worthy of all support, is worthy not only of your best wishes, but of your most earnest and unceasing aid. If, as the wisest man said, there is a time for every thing,—a time to be silent and a time to speak,—then the time to speak is whilst we have health and strength and life; the time to be silent is only when we lie unconscious in the grave.

No. XI.

AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE.

May 8, 1844.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen, I address you this evening under the disadvantage of not having been present at the early part of the proceedings, from a cause which I must make a plea for your indulgence as regards what I do address to you, namely, personal indisposition, which presses on me even in sight of so inspiriting and magnificent an assembly as the present. And what can be imagined more inspiriting or magnificent than these meetings? The long series of them that has now been held with unabated attention and zeal,—meetings of individuals gathered together to listen either to those elementary and simple truths which every one knows, or to the recondite speculations and laborious researches of political economy, not often found to gain the attention of multitudes,—meetings in which every heart glows with as burning a sense of the wrong we denounce as ever nerved those who took the field to contest against injustice with muskets on their shoulders and swords by their sides, and yet which has blended this sense of wrong with a prudence as wise and a forbearance as dignified as ever marked the best school of philosophers,—meetings which have made this place an asylum of truth and justice, at a time when those qualities have been banished from the mansions of the men whose stations ought to have made them the leaders of the people, and when they have been violated in those legislative halls which ought to have been their sacred shrine, where their blessings were worked out for the entire mass of the community.

I confess that, for myself, I sometimes weary of the statistics of this question, interesting as they are. The list of deaths which a rise in the price of food has occasioned, —the long muster-roll of pauperism kept up by the continual pressure from year to year,—committals for crime bearing their constant proportion to the fluctuations in the price of food,—calculations of the number of poor children

that die above those of the rich in consequence, not of the hard bearing of natural causes, but of artificial laws in aggravation of the disparity of condition,—these, and all the other fearful items in that account, although they are of a nature to harrow up the soul, yet the continuous detail drives us back upon that one plain, simple truth in which the whole question is involved, and which contains all its merits,—I mean the fact that "the labourer is worthy of his hire." There is the beginning and the end of the argument, in my view of the matter. It is a question of justice, of simple, impartial, universal justice. The doom of mankind is toil, and the labourer is worthy of his hire, worthy of it undiminished by trick, rapacity, or oppression; worthy of his hire for whatever it will fetch in the world's market; worthy of his hire to lay it out with whomsoever he may please, and for whatsoever he will; worthy of it undiminished by any interference except that only which takes from him his proportion of the national expenditure, of that which is fairly necessary for the carrying on the government, and for the defence of the community. Indeed, all other matters, although upon many accounts it is worth while to go into their consideration, are but incidental to this great controversy; here is its essence.

We affirm that the labourer is worthy of his hire: the monopoly that levies taxation for class profit, and not for national objects, denies that proposition, tramples on it, spurns it as if it were a mere cobweb, and not a primary law of human society, and one of the first dictates of nature and of Providence. It is an accident that the manufacturer thinks the violation of this law diminishes his profits; it is an accident that the landlord thinks that the violation of this law enlarges his rents. Were it directly the reverse—did justice to those who toil, by allowing them the full results of their toil, injure the manufacturer and benefit the landlord—I should still say precisely the same —let justice be done. The difference in the class makes no difference in the principle; we must not regard these temporary and subordinate considerations: here is the first obligation of society and of law,—the recognition of a title as sacred, nay, more so, than that by which any species of property whatever is held, by which any titles or estates are bequeathed or inherited. I see why none should regard them, because in the whole history of mankind—at least of

peaceful legislation—I believe no class was ever ruined by justice unless it deserved that fate by crime. So linked together is the order of things in nature, that the dictates of equity are never violated with impunity: they who have gone on on that road should look about them and return as soon as possible; and they who hold property, and defend the enactments of society for the security of their possessions, of all people should be tender of the labourer's right, and regard that as specially sacred, for without it their title-deeds are but so much parchment. A man's right in his limbs is beyond and above any one's right in his land. Those who will not allow him to say his soul is his own, must at least allow that his body is his own; and what he wins from his fellow-men in the supply of their wants, or from nature in its fertile returns to the application of human toil, is his by the first of all titles; and those who trample on it endanger the entire order of society, and do that which, if carried out to its consequences, would break down all safety in property, annihilate all successions in honours, and shake thrones to their very foundations.

It is important in one point of view, however much to be regretted on account of its evils in another respect, that this first ground of justice cannot be reached for the purpose of hostile invasion but by passing over other grounds; and that those who interfere with the right of the workman to what he earns in the sweat of his brow, also meddle with the tradesman, the merchant, the capitalist, and the large manufacturer. And in the wrong inflicted on these, a spirit has been raised, an organisation produced, a machinery set up and put to work, which shows those who toil their way to the peaceful acquisition of what is due to them, in combination with other classes of society, suffering similar injuries, and having to assert analogous rights. It is well for the enemies of justice, for its violators—and there is this breakwater between them and the toiling multitudes—that they have to deal, in the first instance, with the League, combined of all classes, and having for its leaders men of station, ability, wealth, and extensive influence; that they have to deal with this combination, and not merely with the labouring multitude disunited from others, and who in such a state of society—if they were left to fight with the aristocracy by whom they are injured—

would give us only the prospect of confusion and desolation; who would either break out into open violence, which would make one great ruin of much of the beauty and ornament of our country, or else, turned aside from their legitimate mode of obtaining subsistence, would spread over the land like swarms of locusts, devouring every green thing, incapable of being driven back or cooped up by all the severities or imprisonments of the Poor-Law system which a landed aristocracy could apply.

There is little occasion for me to attempt any array of details; when not only at the early meetings of the League in this place you have heard the commercial part of this question so ably and amply argued, but when, at its more recent meetings, at three or four in succession, you have heard the agricultural division of it as thoroughly entered into, at once from members of the landlord and those of the tenant class of agriculturists; you have heard statements, showing that some amongst them are alive to their own interests, that they see that honesty is the best policy, and sympathise with those who are claiming their rights against the body to which they nominally belong, and have voluntarily proffered here the results of that inquiry which in another place was asked for and superciliously refused. You have had your open committee on this portion of the subject. Evidence has been adduced here which might well settle the question, and opposed to which certainly we find no particle of contradictory evidence from the rival and antagonistic society. In fact, all the arguments of what calls itself the "Agricultural Protection Society" appear to have evaporated in the production of one tract in three months, and that tract chiefly characterised by the disgraceful peculiarity of being the most dishonest publication that has issued from the press for many a long year. While there is not a position in it, bearing the semblance of reasoning, that has not been over and over again discussed, refuted, and exploded on these boards,—while it is fallacious in its logic, untrue in its history, false even in its contemporary facts,—it is, above all, glaringly and outrageously false in its attempt to pervert the highest authority of this country—the patriarch of its political economy—to bring him into court as a witness in the cause of monopoly. An attempt so impudent as this I believe never to have been made in any court of justice for any cause however desperate.

In the face of the whole tendency of his system, in the teeth of his well-known principles, reiterated from book to book and chapter to chapter of his great work, the "lords and gentlemen of the committee of the Agricultural Protection Society" have called, not a false witness into court, but have called Adam Smith into court as their witness, putting their false words into his mouth. This is beyond the plea of mere literary license. There is not a gentleman connected with the press, here or any where else, who would be capable of committing such a fraud; or, if such a one was found, who would not be discharged from his employment for so doing, and be denounced by his fellow-labourers. It is an attempt to impose in this great cause the highest authority on one side as an authority on the other. That individual members of that committee should say they disown the pamphlet, and wash their hands of it—as I understand some of them have said in private—is not enough; there is much more than this due to the sense of public justice and decency. It is a violation, we will say nothing of Christian morality,—but it goes very far indeed to touch the honour of a British gentleman that his name is in any way mixed up with such a subornation of false testimony.

The proceedings of these meetings have attracted animadversion in one particular, which is, perhaps, better worth adverting to than any thing which has been urged by the Protection Society. It has been said, and in quarters seemingly not unfriendly to our objects, that too much of a tone of exaggeration has been indulged in here, as to the benefits that may accrue from Corn-Law repeal. We are alleged to have represented the results of such a measure as constituting a perfect millennium on earth, as healing all the evils and wretchedness of society, and creating such a state as the poets might sing of as the return of the golden age on earth. Now, how much reason for this imputation may have been given I do not know; but I think the general representation here of the repeal of the monopoly laws has been rather as a cure for an evil, than as the production of all this amount of virtue and happiness. Our first business is to struggle with the acknowledged mischiefs that are abroad in society; to apply something like mitigation to the aggravated horrors that have existed in manufacturing towns at particular seasons, and that are

found to a large extent in great cities at all times; to assist the great body of society, by enabling them to help themselves; and it is surely no objection to a medicine to say that, though it may cure a disease, it will not confer the gift of immortality. But, besides this, there is, I think, demonstrably a large amount of practical good which may be most confidently anticipated from the extension of Free-Trade principles. It is said that, were these barriers thrown down, there would be a great amount of speculation, there would be an immediate amelioration of the working classes; but that it would be found that behind these artificial barriers there are natural obstructions which cannot be passed; and that the world, or our own country, would still exhibit, in a short period of time, very much the same amount and degree of suffering as had been temporarily relieved by this legislative measure.

Now, I demur to there being such natural barriers to be speedily reached after the first influx of good from the practical establishment of Free-Trade principles. Where are those barriers? So long as there is but the most insignificant fraction of the land of Europe which is well cultivated, what an indefinite increase of progress is to be found there at our very doors! Then there are interminable forests and prairies to the world's end which are ready to yield their produce to the hand of the cultivator. We reach not the natural limits of man's progress whilst there are climates abounding in rich fruits and in natural products of various descriptions, which may be readily exchanged for the products of the human labour and ingenuity of other countries. We are in no danger whilst the tropical regions are in all their richness; whilst there are lands so fertile that sometimes their pork is spoiled by being fattened too much on peaches; while there are millions yet destitute of that convenient clothing and of those dwellings which should be the lot of every inhabitant of this world; while out of its 900,000,000, not 200,000,000 are yet reached by the manufacture of articles deemed essential to a comfortable existence; while in all countries there is a fund of power which may be stimulated to action, and while free interchange has its full room, for coming ages and ages, to promote the good of each from the resources of all: we may look onwards, I think, to such an advancement as we need feel no discouragement if there be some

eventual limit thereto; we may anticipate that the triumph of Free Trade would give an impetus to the world analogous to that which Europe experienced at the great period of the Reformation, when it shook off the fetters of feudalism in which it had been so long cramped and enslaved—of that feudalism which is mimicked now by the men who make their landlords' titles a trade and a dignity, and who keep up that trade by means which depress all other classes whatever.

It is in this direction that I look for the true greatness, for the real independence of our country—that sort of independence which the patriot will desire, and in desiring which he will have the satisfaction of feeling that he is cherishing no narrow purpose, but that his patriotism is in harmony with the most extensive philanthropy. Independence is universal dependence—the mutual interchange of good, in whatever quarter that good can be realised. Of all schemes of national independence, the most puerile and paltry, as well as the most fallacious, is that which is sought for through the medium of protective duties on the importation of food. Modern Greece won independence by the remains of its original freedom of spirit, and the traditions of its ancient glory. Switzerland achieved her independence by tenacity for its simple and pure manners, when they were outraged by its subjugators. The United Provinces won their independence by their regard for the rights of conscience and liberty of religion. The little republic of San Marino, amidst Europe's convulsions, maintained its independence by moderation. The United States of America won their independence by resistance to taxation without representation. By a variety of pure principles have noble actions been called forth, and national independence achieved or preserved, leaving it for the proud nobility of England, with their Norman titles and their long pedigrees, to dream of securing national independence through the agency of custom-house officers. Oh, when the author of our national song delighted in the contemplation, the proud contemplation, of British independence — when Thomson sang of his country,

> "Still more majestic shalt thou rise,
> More dreadful from each foreign stroke,
> As the loud blast that tears the skies
> Serves but to root thy native oak,"—

he little thought that any body would ever have imagined that that oak was most safely rooted in the dunghill of protective duties. Let the independence of Britain be a reliance upon her own skill, not an attempt to creep under any safeguard of this description: applying the capital she has amassed, exercising the intellectual acuteness and vigour which has ever distinguished her inventors, and displaying that indomitable power of labour which marks her multitudes, she makes herself independent of all by rendering to all those services which they cannot do without; and in the necessity of such services for their well-being, amply will she reap in return from them what is most important to her own well-being, and thus regain and exercise what Milton calls "her ancient prerogative" of teaching the nations how to live.

I believe we have present in this meeting, and the time of year makes it to be expected that it should be so, a more than usual proportion of friends from different parts of the country; and I cannot conclude without a few remarks having special reference to them. I wish them to take back into the country, as the practical lesson which the League at this moment is most desirous of enforcing, the necessity of attending to the registration. Never yet have the people worked the machinery of the Reform Bill; from its first enactment it has been managed by parties for party purposes; but never by the people for their own benefit. You must remember that the Bill which makes this machinery necessary, has destroyed the old opportunity of popular enthusiasm carrying a point suddenly at an election. It is of no use now that you are enthusiastic: when the time of election comes, if the registration has been neglected, you are only like the unarmed warrior, who, whatever the intensity of his interest in the conflict, and how great soever the power he might have had with his weapon of turning the tide of battle, can only look hopelessly on, a forlorn spectator, with no small self-accusation in his own bosom. In no place, even where the registration has been most attended to, has any thing like the entire number of qualified persons been put on the list. The investigation which has been carried on in London shows that there are tens of thousands whose claims have every probability of being established. Look after this, friends from the country, and see to it in your own localities.

Remember that the elections which occur now, from time to time, are not a true test of what our question will be when its forces are in the field. We look to the elections that pass now as to their moral, not as to their numerical results. We have no dream of adding such a number of Free-Traders in the present parliament upon these particular occasions as can make any impression whatever on the divisions there. Our time will come by and by. Now, the occasions are to be taken when victory, as it was in London, is great by its moral strength, by the electrical stroke which it gives the country. Such another occasion has occurred in South Lancashire, and that county will be fought, and fought with a spirit proportioned to the emergency of the occasion. There the friends of Free Trade—Leaguers or not Leaguers—will take the field; though the county may be partitioned between large landlords, every one of whom stands aloof or looks on with hostility, yet the battle will be fought with an energy that will make them tremble for the fate of the county, if it does not bear away the prize before their eyes. Think of these things, I say again, as you return into the country. Have the hundred eyes of Argus for the registration lists, and that will give you the hundred arms of Briareus for the elections, every one striking a death-blow at monopoly. I know how much there is to contend with in these matters.

The *Western Times* told us the other day of a young man in a workshop at Exeter in which there were ten workmen: the foreman announced to them authoritatively that they were all to vote for the Attorney-General; five of them, being Tories, obeyed the mandate of the master; the other five were of a different description,—four of them did not vote at all, but one voted according to his conscience, and he, we are told, was discharged, though bearing the best of characters, and having a poor mother dependent on him for subsistence. Such is protection at election times! And then some monopoly-lord looks tenderly on; and while the son, perhaps, is compelled to have recourse to the dietary of the poor-house, the mother, if she is fortunate, may obtain a pittance from "the Benevolent Society for the Protection of Poor Needlewomen." Such is the result of the interference with which, in all localities, and among almost all classes, the friends of

truth and justice in this Free-Trade question, and in so many other public contests, will have to struggle.

I confess I cannot contemplate without disgust the amount of crime which is perpetrated by those who pass for respectable, moral, and even religious members of society, but who seem to think that all principle is superseded by the struggle of an election and by the prospect of seats in Parliament. Why, the landlord who purchases land, reckoning that he buys votes at the same time—whose tenants' polling according to his order is a portion of the rent that is paid for the farm—who exercises the cruelty of his authority by a threat of dismissal from the holding of those who are not obedient—who, directly and indirectly, applies the screw to tradespeople and labourers—who is connected with those operations by which integrity is broken down, and the poor man taught the first lesson of guilt in an offer so large as to dazzle and bewilder him, and who, perhaps, by this is led into a long course of corruption and iniquity—whose conduct makes the noblest of institutions (the representative) the means of manufacturing baseness, and who too often merits the stigma of being a suborner of ruffianism and a missionary of demoralisation,—incurs a guilt for which, in my view, no palliation can be offered by the greatness of the prize or the frequency of the custom. Compared with this, I do not hesitate to say that the poor outcast who walks the Strand for the wages of infamy, contributes less to the amount of public vice than many persons who are dignified as "noble," and would less pollute by her presence the circle of a court or the presence of royalty.

I have another thing to say to our friends from the country; and that is, let them take care of the tricks which are practised here. There is thimble-rigging and ring-dropping in other places besides Epsom or the pothouses of the metropolis. Let them beware of knavish humanities. I would not utter one syllable to steel any man's heart against a grief that should be felt, or to close his pocket from liberal almsgiving; but when it is attempted to blind the country to the claims of justice by introducing some show of alleged charity; when comparatively imperfect, pitiful, and paltry donations are set up in the room of giving to every one that which is rightfully his own;

when the enumeration of these is made boastfully to turn us away from the real and only cure for the country's misery, and the distress of so large a portion of its inhabitants,—why, then, I say it is time to cry "Beware!" and to expose the sophisms and the duplicity, whatever aristocratic names may adorn the lists.

It is a false and bastard charity; I mean that which, while it gives to this or that particular class of the poor something to lighten the day's pressure, denies them that good by which they could serve themselves from year's end to year's end; a charity which would cut down the hours of work in the mill, and at the same time the worth of wages in the market; a charity which gives guineas to individuals, while it draws millions from the community; a charity which bestows a square half-inch of court-plaister to the scratch on the finger of society, while it drives the iron of oppression into the very soul of the country; a charity that gives hundreds of children a penny bun, while it makes millions of men pay 9*d.* for the 6*d.* loaf; a charity that, having created a conflagration of misery and wretchedness, brings its silver thimble to put its drop of water on the flames. I say that this charity is unworthy of absorbing the regard of right-minded men; it is a sort of peddling man-millinery of humanity, that should not stand in the way of the greatest philanthropy of all, that which renders impartial justice to every man who labours. Let them give over talking sensibility and voting monopoly; let them render justice, justice to the poor, and they will then take care of their own children; they will pay their workwomen, select their own schools, do that for themselves, and do it very much better than any self-appointed patron can; and will realise, in the comfort of their dwellings and in the progress of their condition, that which they deserve by their toil, but which no charity ever has supplied or ever can.

Those who are present at such a time as this from the country, perhaps, have some of them come to London in connection with many of the institutions that are now holding their anniversaries. They have come to talk of subjects more sacred than that which occupies us here; but I would say to them that, if such have been the topics of their attention and the tone of their minds, I desire no

better state of mind for our meetings, because I believe that the doctrines of Free Trade are essentially connected with the giving peace on earth and diffusing good will among mankind. What, indeed, is a greater bar to the progress of religion in the land than monopoly? It interferes with devout associations even in those natural scenes that excite them almost instinctively in the human bosom. In all the richness of harvest, when golden fields are waving in heaven's light, and you see the peasant or the poor labourer look on, and when thankfulness to Providence should arise in his heart, there comes the shadow of the dark cloud of monopoly brooding over the scene, and interposing between him and the sunshine of God's bounty. Feelings have not their full, free, and fair play, even on the most sacred points; nor can they, for we may be assured that there will be no rest—there can be only one incessant struggle—until the claims of justice are conceded by the possessors of power. In promoting this, they will be co-operating with a moral and religious work, one which deserves to be classed with those which made illustrious such names as those of Howard and Clarkson, for bringing emancipation to slavery, the light of heaven into the darkest and dreariest regions of wretchedness, the song of gladness to the tongue of the widow and the orphan, and kindlier feelings of social order where now all is strife and contention. As a good work, then, let them promote by their concurrence while they are here, and by their operation when they return to their several places of abode.

And now, for myself, I have to thank you for cheering sympathy which may seem in some measure have rendered unnecessary the apology with which I commenced; but whether in sickness or in health the cause which lays stronger grasp upon the heart than does this great cause of justice and humanity one for which the exertions of a life would be and dying breath could scarcely be poured out appropriately than in a last protest against the system which denies to man the rights of his C charter of his being, and the bounty of his C

No. XII.

AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE.

May 22d, 1844.

It is now so near the time at which it is the wholesome rule and practice of these meetings to adjourn, that I could well desire to be excused speaking on this occasion, were it not that I would not seem to flinch from doing a portion of that sort of garrison duty which is devolved upon us at the present time. In the absence of so many champions of this great and good cause—men whom this assembly has been accustomed to see here week after week—we are left, as it were, to guard the fortress of Free Trade, and to take as much care as lies in our power that it sustains no damage in their absence; to show that there is no peril, while they are withdrawn, that the banner of Free Trade should be lowered before the black flag of monopoly; and to wait here to welcome them back soon, I trust, with a shout of triumph ringing in the air, and to add our gratulations to those with which they may have been already welcomed, for the victory which their exertions will have been instrumental in obtaining. And in the fulfilment of this duty, whilst we have only to look on at the strife in which they are engaged, it is matter, I think, of satisfaction that this first county conflict will be fought on the one great question in reference to which the League is organised.

The matter comes plainly and simply before the electors of South Lancashire. There is no confusion or mistake; the battle is fought for that which alone we contemplate in these meetings, and which is the one object of the organisation of the Anti-Corn-Law League. For be it known to all, friends or foes, that this is the one bond of our union. Whatever may be our opinion on other topics —whatever I myself, and some who have addressed you this evening, may think either of church establishments, or how many and what class of individuals should possess the suffrage, and numerous other questions of the deepest mo-

ment, and exciting strong feelings—yet here we know nothing of these questions. They are not mooted unless the infatuated obstinacy of those who resist our claim should compel them to be agitated; and then who can say what questions may arise, what interests or antique *prestiges* may be shattered and wrecked in the storm that will ensue! For no cuckoo cry of blue or yellow colours—for no cant words of "Whig" or "Tory" faction—for no scheme of "Old England" or "Young England," with its propositions of saints'-days and maypoles for the people—for no old strife of faction or modern conundrums—is this great battle fighting in South Lancashire; but plainly and broadly the contest is for Free Trade on the one side, and monopoly on the other. Upon that we ask the verdict of the electors of that district; if they give it in our favour, it will be a more encouraging triumph, perhaps, than any which has yet been achieved; and if we fail, it will only be to return to the conflict, with renewed vigour and fresh determination to try the other counties, to appeal to the entire constituency of the kingdom, to get its verdict in our favour, and then to stand or fall by demanding of those who administer the constitutional power of the country whether they will or will not hear the voice of their political creators.

One is always curious to know what can be said on these occasions, and I find in the *Times* of this morning a speech reported, of the monopolist candidate, Mr. Entwistle, made at Bolton on Monday last, in which he uses these expressions: "Trade had already been carried on in this country to an enormous extent, and it was for the purpose of extending it still further that they were asked to injure, if not destroy, one of the most important, if not the most important, interests in the kingdom." The poor man seems alarmed at the magnitude of the trade of this country. He complains that it is "enormous." Why, a giant's constitution requires a giant's food. Is not the population "enormous"? Does it not increase at the rate of nearly 1000 a day? Are not the wants of the millions "enormous" beyond all rule or precedent, and demanding a corresponding supply? Are not the evils which industry has to meet "enormous"? Is not the taxation of the country "enormous"? And, if monopolists will start such

expressions, is not rent "enormous"? And is not the imposition of a tax on the people's food for the enhancement of that rent the most "enormous" of all other enormities? It is a strange discovery, this of the wonderful growth of trade. Who finds it so out of South Lancashire? I suspect I might also ask, Within that county? Do our shopkeepers complain that trade has grown so enormous that they do not know how to enlarge their establishments sufficiently, and that they are quite distressed to know to what to apply the surplus profits of their enormous gains? Do our shipowners find fault with the enormous extent of our commerce? Do they raise this cry at Hull, where in the last month, between the 10th of April and the 9th of May, sixty-four vessels arrived laden with foreign corn, and from the injurious operation of our sliding scale, forbidding merchants to anticipate the time when such supplies are needed and can profitably be brought in, out of those sixty-four ships sixty-one were foreign vessels? Throughout the country the want is not the limiting and abridging trade, but the increasing it and extending the means of subsistence, until distress, suffering, crime even, whose enormity is created by the pressure of these laws, shall give way to an antagonistic power of like gigantic force, but of more beneficent purpose.

Mr. Entwistle does not absolutely propose to drive our trade back within narrower limits, although it is to that his argument tends. In such a state of society as ours, and in the condition of this country, trade is essentially progressive. To check its course, which is what he does propose—to protest against its further extension, which is what he does declare—what would this be but to produce a mass of misery, the contemplation of which must appal every human mind. It is of no use to say of the population that they are redundant; it is of no avail for the landowners to say, "We do not want these people," or for the factory proprietor to reply, "Neither do we want them." It is utterly useless to complain of Nature as having made a blunder in the production of such multitudes on this limited island of ours;—there they are—the millions in their want, and with their strength; there they are in their sufferings and their destitution, with power of earning an independent supply if they are not interfered with by re-

strictive laws. They exist, and you cannot order them out of existence; they are "a great fact," and must rule other facts, and eventually they must rule legislation also.

Why this jealousy and ill-feeling, approaching to scorn, on the subject of trade? What could the body politic do without it? Its members are as essential to the well-being of the entire body as those who may hold themselves the most dignified portion of that great and complex unity. To say that the landed interest is to be looked at as the worthiest and the most important in the country, and that trade in its natural progress is to do nothing to interfere with that interest, is only like the folly of the fiddler who had hurt both his foot and his hand, whose constant language to his medical attendant was, "Doctor, never mind my foot—that is of no consequence; do but cure my hand —take care of that;" until at last the doctor, wearied with this absurdity, cried out, "Why, you fool, you 'enormous' fool, if your foot be mortified, what will become of your hand?" Let the possessors of property learn the lesson which that old story teaches. They are as dependent on the multitude as the multitude is upon them, and they cannot with impunity trifle with its wants or its rights; neither can they set up an interest, whether they call it "the interest of the land" or any other, which ought for a moment to weigh down the just claims of the millions; still less a system which, by its artificial production of dearness in price and its artificial restriction of naturally advancing trade and commerce, fills the land not only with suffering, but with guilt also, inducing such events as that which has lately occupied, and ought not to glide from, the attention of the inhabitants of this metropolis—I mean the condemnation to such punishment as even gross crime only finds its due award in, of a poor creature for an act of recklessness to which she was reduced by the absence of the means of employment and of the necessary food for the day's subsistence. It ought not to be borne while food is dearer than it might be—made so by artificial regulations—that there should be such a condemnation, not merely, as in the first instance, of death upon the gallows, but even of such a limited sentence as seven years' transportation for a poor creature who is in fact found guilty of destitution, and is condemned for the crime of being driven to desperation.

Why, if agriculture is only to be supported by such laws, I should say, then, let agriculture sink. Chemists tell us that there is in the human blood a certain quantity of iron; they say this may be extracted, separated, and produced in the metallic form, and that from the veins of forty men iron enough may be produced to make a ploughshare. If so, such a ploughshare, while these laws continue, ought to be the badge and crest of Agricultural Protection Societies.

And what propriety is there in the contrast between agriculture and trade? Landownerism is itself a trade in this country—a most sordid and unfair trade, taking every advantage; doing that which no other trade can accomplish—namely, creating artificial profits by the prostitution of the legislative authority. It is a trade not only in corn and money, but, when we look at the political influence for which the possession of land is coveted, it is a trade in votes, consciences, bribery, perjury, and demoralisation. The feudal nobles! the ancient nobility of our country! They are no such thing.

In certain recent complaints, to take a very minor operation of this great question of Free Trade,—in certain alleged minor evils, like that which came out the other day, when the Duke of Richmond complained of the operation of Peel's tariff upon the value of his salmon streams in Scotland, respecting which he said he had lost 2000*l.* from being obliged to reduce the rent of the tenant who rented them,—why, it is evident, if this be so, that the people of this country, in the consumption of salmon, have been plundered of 2000*l.* a year by this coroneted fishmonger.

Look, again, at some other features of this trade of landownerism. In one of their own journals—one which is preëminently theirs—the *Morning Herald*, about a week ago, there was inserted a selection of extracts from a pamphlet, introduced with these remarks: "That some such effort as this is needed can require no proof. When we find a single county within sixty miles of the metropolis (Suffolk) disgraced and dismayed by more than fifty incendiary conflagrations within two months, it cannot be a time to rest in contented indolence." Quotations are then made from the pamphlet, which is entitled *Remedies for*

some of the Evils which constitute the Perils of the Nation, which bring out in bold relief the fact that the landowners' trade wages war on cottage habitations; that in one county after another the number of families has increased, and the number of dwellings diminished. They will not allow humanity to rest its foot upon their soil, unless it be profitable to themselves, if they can help it. In Bedfordshire we find that, between the years 1801 and 1831, there has been in three villages an increase of 54 in the number of families, and a decrease in the dwellings by the actual demolition of 22 cottages. In Buckinghamshire, in five parishes, the families in that time increased by the addition of 129, while the cottages diminished by 41. In Cambridgeshire, in three parishes, the families augmented by 166, while the dwellings were reduced by 18. In Hampshire, in seven parishes, there was an addition of 248 families, accompanied by a demolition of 124 houses. In Sussex, in five parishes, the families increased by 62, and the houses diminished by 59. So that the general result of this very cursory glance over these six counties was, that in 1801 there were 2551 families accommodated in 2375 dwellings, leaving only 176 families to seek for a share of other habitations; while in 1831 the families had increased to 3307, and the dwellings were reduced to 2041, leaving 1266 families to be only sharers in the shelter of a roof belonging to others. What outcries we have heard against, and what reprobation of, the French revolutionary watchword of "Peace with cottages and war with palaces!" But that cry, the signal as it may often have been of plunder and massacre, was to my mind not half so disgusting as this war on cottages for the benefit of palaces.

Now, observe, these are all great agricultural counties—the places where the system is wrought out to the fullest extent that it can be in such a country as ours, and where we see what the unchecked predominance of the so-called agricultural system tends to realise. Who can wonder after this, that in one of these counties there was, as the same article informs us, fifty incendiary conflagrations within two months? And they have kept up, and do keep up, scenes of this description. It is not that League meetings are held there: those meetings, have scarcely taken place at all in the county of Suffolk, where this crime is

most predominant. There is no such coincidence, as is so often insidiously pointed out by Pro-Corn-Law lords. They have it all their own way in that county; and there is the result. The landlords go down from the metropolis to keep Whitsuntide; they refer to that sacred commemoration in which we are told that tongues of flame descended from heaven to earth. They go to witness "the tongues of flame" ascending from earth to heaven, kindled, not for the preaching of peace and good will, but the result of crime produced by legal oppression, the eloquent pleaders of the wrongs, sufferings, and degradations of that mute peasantry. And all this is put into the newspaper from which I quote it; for what purpose, think you? Why, that we should subscribe to a charity,—should help some one or other of the benevolent associations that my Lord Ashley and others are forming,—that we should give something in order that cottages may be made more comfortable,—as if, under such a system, improvement could be carried into effect without the whole benefit rapidly gliding away from the hands of the artisan or labouring tenant, and finding its way into the clutches of the landlords! "Why do you not manage," said a friend of mine in Ireland, some little while ago, at a cottage where he had stopped in his wanderings, "to have a better kettle than that to boil your potatoes in?" "Bless you, sir," replied the inmate, "if we were to have a new kettle seen here to boil our potatoes in, the landlord would be sure to put something on our rent next quarter." That is the great gulf towards which all such improvements must tend. Charitable collections raised here for the benefit of the starving fishermen in the Orkneys! Why, they have gone by wholesale into the pockets of the Scotch landlords! Towards that tends every thing: the great omnipresent eye of monopoly is over all the food in the country; and there cannot be a morsel of bread put into the mouth of the poorest pauper, but what the noble and highest-titled landlords have their share of it as a spoil.

And in what way, and upon what principle, are these enormities apologised for? There is a point which I have mentioned here before very recently, but which I do not intend should be lost sight of by the public,—I mean the dereliction of principle which has been shown by the Agricultural Protection Society in its first publication. It will

not do to call it, as some have done, a point of "literary criticism;" it is no such thing. It is a question of moral honesty and common decency. False quotations from the writings of Adam Smith were once proved on Mr. Cayley's pamphlet; after a time he put a letter into the *Morning Herald*, half-confessing and half-defending the charge, but admitting the substitution of the word "protection" for that of "encouragement," and also admitting that in two instances, if not in more, he had not taken consecutive words of those which were marked in his pamphlet as the words of Adam Smith, and promising that these, and any other error that might be pointed out, should thereafter be corrected. Now, what is the fact? Why, that this publication has been reduced in price from 1*s.* to 2*d.*, so that by those who buy it, it may be bought the more largely. It is distributed, it is said, by tens of thousands, or more, throughout the country,—I dare say sent down by hundredweights into South Lancashire at this moment. And yet, notwithstanding Mr. Cayley's printed apology and profession one month ago, to this day these falsifications are not corrected. I purchased a copy of the pamphlet on this very afternoon. I found all the falsifications there: the alteration of the word "encouragement" into "protection," the perversion of the quotation on the Navigation Laws, and that other perverted quotation, in which the farmers are represented as belonging to one class of society, and the manufacturing capitalists and merchants to another, in defiance of the spirit of the passage, if read entire in Adam Smith; and that still worse falsification, in which, where the author says whatever keeps produce below what it would rise to is an injury, the word "price" is inserted,—an alteration pointed out to the meeting by Lord Radnor, and bearing on its face the mark of the grossest invasion on the meaning of the author. All these, I believe, remain; and the pamphlet appears to be printed from the very same type as that which was used in the first instance. In spite of all the apologies and promises of correction, the only addition is a little bit of paper pasted on the bottom of one page, pointing to "encouragement" and "protection" in the next passage but one; and saying of the other passage, that it is a compression of what the author says, and not a continuous quotation,—the fact being that it is no compression

at all, but an unfair selection of phrases, by which they are made to bear a different meaning from what they do when read continuously in the original.

Now, I say that all this would not be tolerated in other matters. It would not be allowed for a moment if wealthy persons were not the offenders, and the public the injured party. If a transaction of this kind had passed between man and man in the aristocratic ranks of society, they would have been compelled to go out with pistols, to obliterate the stain which would attach to the character of the guilty individual. I repeat, what has been already said in the *League* paper, that "if the chivalrous ancestors of those landowners—those of them, indeed, who had chivalrous ancestors—had behaved in tournament as their descendants have done in argument, their spurs would have been hacked from their heels, and their banners kicked out of the lists." But here they are—their names all committed to detected falsehood for fraudulent purposes,—five dukes, an earl, nineteen members of parliament,—brilliant names, all made "the shameless heralds of a lie."

By no such power or means as these can our cause be arrested in its course towards triumph. Such means never yet answered for any length of time, and never will. The power of truth, the spirit of the nation, common sense, and moral feeling will always rise against them, heave them off, and consign them to that defeat and disgrace which is their desert. By such means, or by any of the arts of monopoly, however obstinately resistance is prolonged, they never will succeed. Their boast is, indeed, a vain one. The League cannot fall, for its basis is in eternal justice; it cannot fall, for if it could there must fall with it those shrines which Heaven has erected in the common human heart,—the shrines of truth, of love, of justice, of charity,—the holy places of the human soul, where it worships what is good, and vows perpetual devotion to the well-being of the community. The League cannot fall, or if it could, it would only be as some of the first and noblest of our race have fallen,—struggling with the mighty tide of corruption and oppression, "falling with a fallen state," and leaving an enduring lesson of animation to others to persist, even to the extremest verge of life, in protesting against all such

neration of the legislative body before we can hope for justice, to say nothing of charity, to the suffering millions from those who are at present the arbiters of our destiny.

There are symptoms, too, which must moderate our expectations of the approaching debate and division on this question. I confess I should not be at all surprised if our strength should even appear less, instead of more, than on some former occasions; and I should be by no means disheartened by any such phenomenon, for when the Whig party gets a glimpse of power, we always find that the phrases and notions which had been thought obsolete by the progress of the controversy are revived again; and in the recent conflicting events which have taken place, as soon as in the legislature any chance of upsetting the rival party and returning to place is perceived, the doctrine of a fixed duty reappears in the Whig newspapers. True it is they have a right to revive it, most assuredly, as any body would have a right to dig a corpse out of the earth if that earth belonged to him; but they would have no right to push that hideous mass of corruption among living beings and say, "This is one of you, and must share in your functions and enjoy a portion of your privileges."

A short time ago, apparently, and logically, the fixed-duty doctrine was dead, buried, rotten, and forgotten; and it only reappears on the stage because there seems to be some slight opening for a certain parliamentary party to return to place. But with fixed duty, as with sliding scale, this League wages unextinguishable warfare. The hostility of our principle is as great in the one case as it is in the other; we know no more compromise with bread-tax in the one form than we do in the other; we abjure them both as only different phases of intercepting the gifts of Providence in their way to minister to human enjoyment. There is a yet further objection to the fixed-duty doctrine which renders it, I think, still more obnoxious; and that is, that it is a principle which tends to divide the interests of the class possessing capital from that of those having only labour to rely upon. It might answer the purpose of the merchant, manufacturer, and shopkeeper, and might in some measure satisfy them, looking exclusively to their own interests; but it does so at the sacrifice of the interests and the rights of

the great majority of the toiling multitude, whose question this is, with reference to whom it ought always to be agitated, and not one atom of whose claim to the food they earn should ever be compromised by any friend of Free Trade on the just and broad principle which that phrase denotes.

In looking at the public indications of the state of our cause, one cannot but be struck at once with the fact of the unabated interest that is manifested in these meetings; and this circumstance is more remarkable, I think, at this time, than it was last year or upon any former occasion, for this reason, that the present period is not one of very much excitement; it is not a time in which there are the cheering and stimulating electoral victories that occurred a few months ago; it is not a season in which the operations of the League have allowed of those numerous country meetings in different parts of the kingdom which some while since occupied public attention, and formed continual occasion for observing the progress of our cause; it has not been a time, except within the last few days, of parliamentary discussions that attracted any very great degree of notice, or excited any peculiar interest in our principles. You have come to this place from week to week, seeing the old familiar faces, and hearing the old familiar voices; you have attended this theatre under no temporary excitement, and influenced by no extraordinary stimulus from without; you have come because there was an increasing zeal in your own bosoms,—because this was in your mind a matter of principle, and not of mere passing excitement; you have come because the determination was fixed and rooted in your own souls, to protest against these outrageous imposts on food until they should be utterly abolished; to reiterate that determination, and by the very fact of your attendance here to call heaven and earth to witness that, come storm or sunshine, calm or struggle, you are resolved to bear your protest, until at length the voice of truth and justice shall prevail over all class interests, and the legislature itself shall yield to the power of public opinion. In this quiet determination,—needing no contrivance or varied means and appliances to keep up your attendance,—I see that calm and growing strength which works like the

mighty elements of nature itself. It is a power which has within itself the means of perseverance; and the means of perseverance in moral power are the means of increase also. It shows that our strength goes on from day to day silently but irresistibly augmenting, swelling like the snows upon the mountain top, until they are formed into the extent and compactness of the glacier, and then ready—affording to bide the time, but ready when that time shall come—to rush down, bearing all before it, and overwhelming every hostile power with the resistless will of a mighty nation.

Miscalculating the quietness with which true power holds its own and augments its influence, we find some journalists still determined to treat the League as comparatively or absolutely defunct. Indeed, only a few days ago there were papers in which one might read that the League had been "driven out of Covent-Garden Theatre by the London Conservative Association." A marvellous rout, indeed, would that be! The generosity which allowed that body the use of this theatre, I think, was by no means misplaced; although, perhaps, those who met were rather unfortunate in the permission being extended to them quite so soon. They should have met to-day instead of last Wednesday; and then, when they toasted their "glorious majority of ninety," they might have been called upon to explain whether they were celebrating the triumph of the Tories over Sir Robert Peel, or the victory of Sir Robert Peel over the Tories;* and the question might especially have been put to Sir Howard Douglas, who voted on the first occasion with Mr. Miles, and upon the second division with Sir Robert Peel, and who prefaced his vote by declaring that his opinions had undergone no change whatever. That was the gentleman who took upon himself, or who had put upon him, at the Conservative dinner here, the office of being responser in reply to the health of

* On the 14th June 1844, a resolution of Mr. Miles, relating to sugar duties, was carried against the Government by a majority of twenty. On the 17th Sir R. Peel gave the House what he called an opportunity of reconsidering its vote, and then, in spite of the opposition of a portion of his party, he succeeded in carrying his own proposals. Mr. Miles, in opposing the Government, complained of its Free-Trade tendencies, and of its not adequately protecting the West-Indian interest.

the Duke of Wellington. Had the Conservative festival been postponed till this evening, they might have had some pithy allusions to the uncovered statue, which I have not seen, but which, I am told, stands with its face towards the church, the post-office, and the Horse Guards, and its back turned upon the Royal Exchange. They stated repeatedly at that festival, and I believe they alleged very truly, that they were not associated to uphold "any particular ministry;" the ministry which such an association upholds, beyond all doubt, must be a ministry which is not "very particular." I wonder much, considering the number of mercantile people there, and the large correspondence which they must keep up in their business, that they did not introduce at least some such toast as this: "Success to those who hold the seals of office, and who break the seals of letters!"

To return to the indications of the progress of our cause: I, for one, reckon it a very gratifying indication, and a good of immense moment effected by the League, that the condition of the agricultural labourer is now forced upon public attention with a power which I think insures that something must be done towards its amelioration. It was the League that brought that condition first into notice, and it did so in the face of the boldest contradiction. Every rural district was described as a perfect Arcadia; all being innocence, comfort, and enjoyment there. The veil is now torn aside, and no patching can ever make it hold together again. The horrid and disgusting reality is exposed, and that reality, however it may be tampered with, I believe never can be materially altered in its character or thoroughly reformed but by the accomplishment of that repeal of taxes on food which is the object of this Association.

How much of this would ever have been attempted had not the League broached the subject—had not the condition of these poor creatures been prominent in the speeches at these and almost every other meeting held in connection with our question throughout the country? Would that great power the *Times* newspaper have taken the matter up as it has done, had there been none of this previous preparation? The *Times* has now sent out its royal commission into the disturbed districts. I say "its

royal commission," for we have other governments besides those that meet in Westminster. The *Times* may be said to a certain extent to rule England, as Daniel O'Connell now rules Ireland. Printing-House Square and the Penitentiary in the Circular Road are seats of government, where influences are exercised which make themselves felt to the remotest borders of either island. The series of papers which are appearing in the *Times* with reference to the condition of labourers in the eastern counties—where, as we find, you may trace on the map the broad black line of low wages and incendiary fires—those papers, by the impression that they produce, will, I think, shame down for ever the calumny so often repeated against the League and these meetings—that they have, or possibly can have, any thing whatever to do with the excitement of such disturbances. That sophism must follow in the wake of many others; they are all on the road to oblivion, and there will soon be little or nothing left to the monopolists but the barefaced assertion, that "to tax your food is good for our pockets, and we will do it as long as you leave us the power of doing so."

It is a blessing even already that the condition of the labourer is now becoming so much understood, and that the need of applying some alleviation is so extensively felt. There is reason throughout those agricultural counties—in Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk, and elsewhere—to bless the name of the League, and the day when its labours commenced. Poor creature! born to filth and hunger; entering the world in a dilapidated cottage, destined, perhaps, to be pulled down under the common clearing system; sent out in his early youth to pick stones on the road that leads to some ducal mansion, kept up in its splendour by the assistance of bread-tax profits; growing up in his strength and maturity to work for 6*s*. a week, and to house and feed as he can; his only refuge—his church, if one may so say—the beer-shop; his only chance of tasting any thing better than dry bread being to go out in the night poaching in the preserves of the squire who is resident hard by,—his course steering between the Scylla and Charybdis of the workhouse and the gaol, with beyond them, in the distance, a view of the gallows made visible by the fire of a blazing barn. For wretches such as these a star of hope has

arisen, and it will hold on its way until it attains the meridian of truth and justice; and the beams of light and knowledge that it sheds attest the power of that principle of operation in the League which has applied to the understanding of mankind, and provided them with information; which has shown not only to the class that was immediately influenced to begin this agitation, but through all classes, commercial or agricultural, the devastating and demoralising influence of the monopoly to which we are opposed.

There are indications of the advance of our cause in the present condition of the hostile power. Where is the great compact phalanx that two years ago was arrayed against us? Where the power which, in the election of 1841, carried every thing before it like a whirlwind—where, I ask, is it now? Quarrelling about almost every question that can be started; contending fiercely respecting a Welsh bishopric; fighting desperately about Dissenters' chapels; going to quarrel about the new Poor Law; having quarrelled about the Ten Hours' Bill; and being involved in a deadly feud on the subject of the sugar duties. Why, there they are,—High Church and Moderate Church,—ancient Tories and modern Conservatives,—Young England and Old England,—there they are; till the premier, stirring up the heterogeneous materials, may well exclaim:

> "Double, double toil and trouble;
> Fire, burn; and, caldron, bubble."

And this is Sir Robert Peel's "great Conservative party," which he was ten years in amalgamating! The present condition of the House of Commons reads a very impressive moral lesson to statesmen to avoid in future the endeavour to form a party without a principle; or what is pretty much as bad, to form a party with half a dozen antagonistic principles. In opposition Sir Robert Peel courted them all, avoiding committing himself with wonderful dexterity; but still each was given to understand—confidentially, as it were—that there was good in the combination. At first it was only to unseat the Whigs, and the rest was all to follow. The amalgamation succeeded so far; and now it exhibits the right honourable baronet in the most pitiable position in which, I think, a prime

minister has ever been placed. Needed for his dexterity, and tolerated for nothing else, there he is, toiling at their work; needed by all, scorned by all, thwarted by all, reproached by all, and the reproaches bearing this marvellous uniformity—that they all strike in one direction. Nobody accuses him of being so sturdy in his principles that he is impracticable; no one charges him with being rash, and going to extreme lengths in carrying out what is right and proper; but every one all round intimates "treachery." The word "trickster" is on all their tongues; and as they search their calendars over, they all agree in giving him Judas for his patron saint.

In this age of invention and discovery we should be astonished at but few things; novelties follow with such marvellous rapidity, and are often of so extraordinary a nature; but not the least astounding is the recent discovery by Sir Robert Peel of the principle of his administration, which he has just found out is the relaxation of our commercial system of prohibition and protection, and the letting in the articles produced in other countries, in competition, with similar articles produced in this. He did not make this discovery before he came into office: there was no announcement of it in the Tamworth manifesto; and it was never proclaimed on the hustings in the election of 1841. He comes out with it only now that he is in a difficult and entangled position. Let his followers think what they will of his new principle, it may recommend some of his measures to us, but it will not commend himself. It can attract no confidence in any quarter. When the time shall come—a period which the pragmaticality of the Whig party makes not impossible—that some statesman must propose the total repeal of the Corn Laws, it may be that Sir Robert Peel will do it: from his hands, as from any other, we will take that repeal, but not as from a champion; not as from one who has claims to trust and confidence, but from one who, if he knew the right, all along dallied with the wrong, and pursued it while it gave him political power; and who, therefore, can only take his place amongst those whom the might of public opinion has conquered into the allowance of a good to a nation that ought never to have been refused.

I have often in this place addressed earnest recommen-

dations to those who assemble here, that they should exert themselves in such ways as their circumstances allow for the furtherance of our cause; that they should pay attention, for instance, to the registration, and do whatever they can to get those who are entitled to vote, and who are friends of our objects, to place themselves in a position for the exercise of their political rights; that they should exert themselves in canvassing, and, by the distribution of tracts and conversation, spread abroad the knowledge of our principles, and the conviction of their truth.

I will only briefly advert to one other topic. Yesterday was the anniversary of the battle of Waterloo. The warriors who won that tremendous fight are enjoying their laurels. Many of them are in a very influential position, and I could wish that the occasion should suggest to their minds an inquiry into what it was that had weakened the social power of Napoleon before his military strength received the complete destruction which it did at Waterloo. Now, I believe that, in tracing the course of events, we should have to go back to the time when his Berlin Decree declared the British Islands in a state of blockade. The laws of trade, it has been said, and most truly so, crushed him like a weed. Opinion had ebbed from him, destroying the allegiance and respect for his policy all over Europe, before the prodigious reverse which his arms sustained on the 18th of June. The system was hollow, and he himself gave it the first great blow in those anti-commercial proclamations to which I have referred. Well, then, let the warriors who triumphed over one blockade of Great Britain think well before they support a class which, in its turn, attempts also to blockade Great Britain. The Corn Laws are a blockade: they warn foreign ships from our shores; they cut off our supply of food; they treat us like a besieged people; they gird us round as though they would starve us out. The blockade which the Duke of Wellington raised by his arms was not more essentially a blockade than this of monopoly; only the latter has not the pretence of being imposed for a great national policy like the former, but for a paltry class interest. It is not that the lordship of Europe is at stake in the contest, but merely that so much more rent per annum is at issue. It is not that kings come into conflict with nations, but it is that

those whose property lies in the manufacture of food, and in the production of fish in the waters, or even canary-seed for birds, feel their interests at stake, and therefore wage war, and endeavour to encompass with their blockade the industrious and toiling multitudes of England.

The system of monopoly is as anti-national as the commercial policy of Napoleon was hostile to the interests of Europe; and it can no more last than did that of the French emperor. No power, whatever victories it may have achieved, can sustain this imposition of monopoly: the blockade will have its Waterloo of final defeat, and monopolist legislation its St. Helena of exile from the boundaries of the civilised world. I trust that the warriors who yesterday assembled, satisfied with the laurels they have gained, rejoice in their hearts that there has not since been occasion for more laurels, and that the peace has been unbroken; long may it continue so! But whether we ascribe the cessation of warfare to the exhaustion of the resources of nations—which, no doubt, has much to do with it, or to the growth of opinion—and that, I think, has also some influence in the matter—I mean the opinion which deprecates an appeal to the sword for the settlement of questions between nation and nation, which may be adjusted amicably, as well as those of individuals, where there is mutual consideration and forbearance,—wherever these are, and in whatever proportions their combinations operate as causes antagonistic to warfare, they are also antagonistic to monopoly. If nations cannot fight because they are exhausted, assuredly they cannot bear the pressure of monopoly when their resources are exhausted. If opinion has set in strongly against the conflict of nation with nation, opinion is equally decided against the conflicts of class with class, especially of the rich and powerful with the poor and laborious for a portion of their earnings.

These same causes will work on in correction of the one mischief, I trust, as they have done in correction of the other. The features are the same of these two sorts of evil: if war impoverishes, if it brings down the merchant from his height of fortune, lays waste the resources of the nation, and crushes the poor into yet deeper poverty, why monopoly reënacts all these scenes, and carries on its op—

pressive influence from year to year. If war desolates the fair face of nature, makes ruins of cities, and a desert where fields had been covered with the waving corn, what is the tendency of monopoly also, but to make the grass grow in populous towns, and keep large tracts of country a desert, which might otherwise have borne their abundant harvest, for the consumption—by means of Free Trade—of labouring multitudes in distant lands. If war kills, if it stains the field of strife with human blood, monopoly destroys human life also by hundreds and thousands, from year to year, and that, too, by lingering agonies, far worse to endure than the short stroke of the sword or the cannon-ball. If war demoralises, training thieves whom peace brings to the gallows, monopoly demoralises also, opening up the sources of crime, spreading it through the different ranks of society, and inciting to theft and violence, until it fills our gaols, and calls down the vengeance of the law. Alike in the evils they generate, and opposed by the same antagonistic principles, I rely on one overruling process for the destruction of both; the same moral law condemns both systems for their criminality, and the same Divine Providence will ultimately work for both a total annihilation.

XIV.

AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE

August 7th, 1844.

Our excellent chairman introduced the business of the evening by describing to you the operations carried on by the Council of the League, and extending through the length and breadth of the country; the object of which is, to prepare a better registration, and to lead the way to such electoral efforts—upon the first opportunity to choose a new parliament—as may secure the success of the cause of Free Trade. Those operations, quietly conducted, are as material to the advance of our cause as those which are most conspicuous; and although for a time these meetings are to cease, yet to-morrow, when you will have read in the *Post* and *Herald*, for the twentieth time, that the Anti-Corn-Law League is dead, those operations going on throughout the country will prepare for a season that shall show as obviously as now that the League is all alive; and its supposed death has been so frequently proclaimed, that those who get their information from no other source than monopolist journals may well imagine that its ghost walks the earth, and works wondrous mischief. They will find that its alleged dissolution is as the seeming death of the seed which the farmer puts into the ground, which is covered up and buried there, but by the immutable laws of Divine Providence it is germinating too, and there in due time will spring up; and for us, as for that seed, harvest now is coming,—a full ingathering of that glorious fruit for which so many have toiled and laboured in these years of struggle. The League, however, does not require to be judged by operations carried on without public observance, or by prophecies of the future relying on the certainties of principles—such a prophecy, for instance, as Mr. Cobden has uttered; for it can bear to be judged by the surest of all tests, that which it has done, and not that alone which is unseen or which is anticipated.

My purpose in addressing you this evening is to advert to the memorials which already the League has created for itself; which need not to be explored like hieroglyphics by the antiquarian, but are written broadly on the face of the country, and form materials for the pages of its future historians. In every direction I find some impress of what the League has done. The few years which it has existed have been marked by two administrations in our government; and both the great political parties show, in their policy, that they have been influenced by the Free-Trade agitation. It modified the policy of the late ministry, although in its youth the then minister was disposed to treat it as mere madness to talk of repealing the Corn Laws; yet at the close of his administration, that which he scoffed at in the time of seeming power, he and his colleagues laid hold of as the most graceful thing by which to retire from office. They fell by it, and made their fall thereby more honourable than had been much of their existence during their power. They had their recompense too. It was the progress which the Free-Trade agitation had made at that period which caused Lord John Russell to be elected a member of parliament for the City of London, and which now gives him his chance of returning to office, provided he will carry out the principles on which he was returned, and by which he holds his seat and his prospects of office. A fixed duty might serve the Whigs to fall by; they can only rise by a total repeal.

The influence of the League on the policy of the administration which succeeded the Whigs has been more marked; for the men in office now are those who, for ten long years, were consolidating a party on the principle of no change, no surrender. They would give up nothing; no, not one jot nor tittle. It was for this that they rallied and strengthened their forces; for this it was that they resisted every attempt at a movement on the part of those who had then possession of office; for this it was that they moved a vote of want of confidence in that party, and effected their overthrow. What was the language of Sir Robert Peel on the first of those great divisions by which the Whigs were expelled from office?—I mean, when they introduced their budget in 1841, and when Lord Sandon's motion on the sugar duties gave the then government a

blow from which it was never able to recover. On that occasion, when they began to show symptoms of resigning and of following their resignation by an appeal to the country, Sir Robert Peel told Lord John Russell it was an irregular thing to resign on a mere fiscal question. He said they need not do that,—no government need resign on a fiscal question; yet he lived to be beaten within three years by his own party on this aforesaid sugar question, and to reduce that party to allegiance by his own threat to resign unless the vote was rescinded. On Lord Sandon's motion, in May 1841, Sir Robert Peel spoke thus,—he was then, as every body knew, looking forward to a change which had obviously become inevitable in the administration of affairs: "I am not," said he, "contemplating a recession in office from the principles with regard to the Corn Laws which I have hitherto maintained. You will ask me, then, how is it possible for me, who have consented to relaxations in commercial relations, to maintain the Corn Laws? You say now that this is the master interest, and that it is utterly impossible there can be a revision of the tariff, or a relaxation of the commercial code, without a revision of the Corn Laws. I utterly deny that proposition." "Mr. Huskisson," he says afterwards, "would have scouted the proposition, that a liberal commercial policy was inconsistent with the maintenance of the present Corn Laws."

Such was the language addressed to the monopolists in parliament. The tone was modified in electioneering speeches to affect the choice of candidates for members at the election; and when the fresh parliament was called, and the new administration formed, why, within about fifteen months from this very declaration, from utterly denying the proposition that a revision of the tariff would involve any alteration of the Corn Laws, Sir Robert Peel revised the tariff and Corn Laws together, to the utter astonishment of those who had placed him in Downing Street. And whence all this? whence these unexpected measures? whence this new tone?—but from this cause, that public opinion has been so influenced by this agitation, that Sir Robert Peel feels it prudent, notwithstanding his dependence on the great monopolist body at his back, to lay out some lines in another direction; to claim as

much credit as he can for Free-Trade policy; to boast that within a year he relaxed commercial restrictions more than the opposite party had done in their whole ten years' tenure of office; and thus to make himself, too, a monument of the influence of this Anti-Corn-Law League agitation.

Why, Mr. Cobden, in that House, might adopt the language, in reference to his own success as the great leader of this movement, which is inscribed on the monument of Sir Christopher Wren in St. Paul's Cathedral, where the spectator is told, if he asks for a monument of the architect, to look around him. A foreigner, whose taste was not exactly hit by the form of the dome of St. Paul's, remarked, "I do look around, and I only see one great fool's cap." When Mr. Cobden looks round for a monument of the influence of this League in the House of Commons, he may see two great fools' caps—one for the ministerial leader, the other for the opposition; fools' caps fitting the heads of those who have the perception of great, wise, and good principles, but who lack the consistency or moral courage to devote themselves to carrying out those principles in legislation, and throw themselves on the good sense and true interests of the country for their support. On the state of parties the future commentator will have, I think, to observe, that in a very short period, and with immense difficulty to struggle with, Free Trade obtained in the House of Commons a body of representatives sufficiently compacted, well-principled, and decided, to make it impossible for any monopolist faction—either Whig or Tory—to govern the destinies of this country. If the influence of this movement be visible on political parties in the legislature, it may assuredly be traced distinctly and broadly on the public mind.

No subject of a similar nature has ever yet in the world's history been so variously and ably illustrated, and I believe in consequence so generally understood and appreciated, as this Free-Trade question now is. I would put the meetings that have been held here in evidence; the kind of topics and arguments in which the audiences have displayed the most lively interest; the quick responses which have been given to points which some few years ago would have been matter of hesitation and of thoughtfulness even

to the great mass of highly educated men. Political economy, as was said of philosophy of old, has been brought down from the clouds to human habitations, mingles with the every-day thoughts of the great mass of the population, and is the subject of their conversation. There is a political intelligence generated by this procedure which must soon banish utterly from the world the prejudices, sophisms, and falsehoods by which mankind have hitherto been deluded. How short a time it is since two great statesmen, Pitt and Fox, made the world ring with their conflicts! and yet it was matter of discussion which of the two was the more profoundly ignorant of the doctrines of political economy; whilst now there cannot be a lisping dandy sent down to the constituency of a pocket-borough, there to represent his relative's importance, who is not crammed from Adam Smith in Mr. Cayley's edition! A people thus instructed are not to be trifled with.

It is a proud boast for the League that, together with intellectual exertion and acquirement, they have been the means of diffusing through the country a spirit of intellectual independence. Wherever I find a disposition to break through that gross servility which has so long been a stain upon a large proportion of the people of this country,—when I find a disposition to call things by their right names, however plausible the appellations by which they have been distinguished,—when I see the same standard of right and wrong applied to the high and the low, the peer being judged by the principles that are applied also to the peasant,—when I find a desire to bear testimony to great and wise principles, and that lively sympathy in the wants and in the wrongs of the poor and helpless class,—why, in all this I see the same influence exercised by the Anti-Corn-Law League, I behold the spread of that influence through the different classes of society, and recognise a determination to work out the right, and to put down the wrong, by peaceful, legal, but honourable and certain means of success, which it is the noble consolation and encouragement of the men who originated this institution that they have been instrumental in diffusing through the country. I know that these best and noblest results are yet much more limited than the leaders of the League and all true-hearted persons must desire. We have evidence

of that; facts which we need not shrink from looking fairly in the face.

It is continually brought up about the League in certain journals, "Look how many elections they have lost; look at the places where they dare not show themselves for a contest;"—why, we have not been able to contest Horsham, Cirencester, and several other places I might mention;—"and they have been beaten in South Lancashire and Birmingham." And what of that? I hold it to be no evil, but I believe it to be a great good to a cause like this, comprising, I apprehend, a vast number of advocates not hitherto connected with political agitation,—not accustomed to the long, toilsome process which must be gone through for the achievement of any great work of social or physical improvement,—I hold it to be a great good that their minds are dispossessed of the notion that you have only to teach people what is true and right, and that then you may rely on the true and the right being forthwith triumphant. Why, if those elections had had a different result, what would the lesson have been,—what the effect on a great portion of those who have been led, for the first time in their lives, in connection with the Anti-Corn-Law League, into the struggle of an agitation?

The lesson would apparently have been, that opinion and action were free in electors; that there was no intimidation, bribery, or active sinister interests to pervert the consciences of the voters, and turn them away in spite of their own thoughts and feelings. And that lesson would have been a gross falsehood. It would have seemed by such a result that monopoly was ready to give up the contest without making a vigorous and desperate effort, and would retire when the vanity and wickedness of its claims was demonstrated to the public; that there was not to be apprehended from it a tooth-and-nail resistance, a struggle to the death, and by most unscrupulous means. And that lesson would have been a falsehood too. It would have been judged, by such a result, that party-spirit had subsided; that it had learned wisdom and rectitude; that people would not, for the sake of pragmatically asserting some point of political sectarianism, have suffered themselves to be beaten through division, when they might have conquered by unity. And that lesson would have

been a falsehood also. It would have appeared, by such results, that the present arrangements are all-sufficient for maintaining the rights and the interests of people in elections; and every thing connected with political machinery and our institutions, as good as possibly can be imagined or desired. And this lesson, too, would have been a falsehood—a gross falsehood. I think we may well put up with disasters, defeat, and postponement of the time when we come to the great final decisive strife, for the effects which are thus produced in the minds of multitudes, for the training and discipline which is thus given for working the continuous, and eventually successful, assertion of the interests of the community.

To those who point with exultation and scorn to these results, I would say, Why, you are laughing at that which is training an antagonistic power—a might which nothing can resist. There are agencies of education in agitation. They have already given much instruction, and they will yet give more, until the whole community is wise enough to see, that in directing its energies towards a single point, and carrying triumphantly one great principle, it is in reality achieving more than could be obtained by any other means, and laying the foundation of national character, greatness, and prosperity. There is another thing which the League has done, and it was an object worthy of their exertions,—it has unmasked the monopolist classes. Their features are known to every one now, and they can never be disguised again. At a comparatively recent period there was a mystification about peers and men in station, as though a different blood ran in their veins from that which flows in the bodies of the great mass of the people; and it was only when Free-Trade principles came into that close, continuous, and animated discussion which they have been recently doomed to undergo, that it was perceived that these feudal associations were all false, and that really those men were as much a trading class as though they had kept shops in Cheapside; and the coronets which used to be thought emblems of a semi-regal dignity in their several districts, pass for nothing more than a sign of so many acres to let, and so much corn to be sold.

Why, they are traders—traders all! They deal in land as well as corn; and in food for all sorts of beings—

from the loaf which the man eats to the seed which the canary-bird pecks in his cage. They trade in fish and pheasants, in ground for gambling-booths upon race-courses; nay, they also lose their money in the races themselves, and then bring in an Act of Parliament to suspend the payment of their penalties. They trade in stars, garters, and ribbons—especially blue ones; and, what is worst of all, they trade in that legislation by which their business is made more profitable: they are hucksters, with the power of law-making for the enhancement of their prices. A great outcry has been raised against the petty cheap linendraper who teaches his apprentice-boy to "shave the ladies," while these noble legislators do infinitely worse than that, for they shave the nation, and the poor they shave the closest and hardest of all. Their fallacies have been exposed, and though they be not the original authors, yet they are the real patrons of the doctrines of the *Morning Post*—the connection of which with incendiarism Mr. Cobden has so luminously traced. Rick-burning in practice is only Richmondism in theory. Nor was there ever a more complete parallel than that between the Richmondites and the rick-burners. If the one wantonly destroys property, so does the other; if the one endangers human life, why, human life has been more than endangered by the other, and that too by wholesale, by these abominable starvation laws. If, in the rick-burner's case, the innocent suffer, who are they that are injured in the other case, but the unoffending, poor, and helpless—their suffering being greater, the more helpless their position in society? If the one destroys the good gifts of Heaven to man, so does the other. It is highly probable that a much larger quantity of corn than these fires in Suffolk and the adjoining counties have destroyed has, in the course of years, been rotting under lock and key, in bond, and has been at last shovelled out into rivers or harbours, as we know was recently the case at Hull, where a considerable quantity, even within a very few months, has been thus destroyed. And where, I pray, is the mighty difference in the element of destruction? Why should it be villanous to destroy corn by fire, and virtuous to destroy it by water? Even without reference to that more awful tribunal which has been appealed to this

evening, I believe the doers of this wickedness will not escape their punishment; if the incendiary be transported for his life, why, after the lives of the monopolists, it will go hard if the honest historian does not gibbet their memory in his pages to all posterity.

The League has also exposed the monopolist class in another way,—by eliciting their virtues, by stimulating their philanthropy. How charitable, provided their Corn Law can escape untouched, do the monopolists show themselves! Plans for the improvement of the condition of the poor are quite in request; and every political section must get up something of the kind. One party founds a society for the relief of the poor needlewomen, who, they contend, are very much injured indeed by people buying cheap shirts, and they allege that every one ought to buy dear shirts for the encouragement of the sempstresses. There is a great charity excited for the needle and thread, but not much for those to whom a cheap shirt is the only chance they have of obtaining any at all. They even had compassion on the poor for working too long, and they were desirous that the machinery in mills should not work too much, so that the workmen might have time to go home and meditate on what they would do with more wages if they got them. They even took care that the poor should be enabled to recreate themselves by travelling on the railways, and they proposed to have third-class trains for the purpose,—and here the philanthropy of the bishops was brought into practice, for they could not think of the poor travelling on railways unless their enjoyment was complete, and they proposed that they should be compelled to go in a first or second-class carriage when they travelled by the railway. They looked every where for a means of indicating their philanthropy but to the poor man's cupboard, where they might see the reduced loaf, which they had sliced away by their monopoly.

In the mean time, while all this is going on, in 1843—only the last year—the people of this country paid in direct taxation upon wheat imported into England the sum of 800,000*l.*; that amount of bread-tax averaging 15*s.* 3*d.* on the quarter, which still, we are told, is not protection enough. Wheat in this country last year averaged 53*s.* per quarter, 9*s.* more than our fellow-subjects pay for it

in Guernsey, where they are out of the boundary of this law; so that we have the pleasure of paying 9*s*. a quarter more for our wheat, we never having been conquered from the French, but living under our own glorious constitution. This overflowing benevolence looks at the morals of the people as well as at their physical condition; and as they want bread, it will give them stones. They shall have churches, thus rendering applicable the usurer's epitaph:

> "In pious as in impious works,
> Like water, still he found his level;
> For having cheated all the world,
> He built a church to cheat the devil."

Such absurdities and enormities as these will never suffer an antagonistic movement to abate. It cannot do so, while they exist; and, during the cessation of these meetings, if you want to know where the League is, if you see a man looking sharply after the registration list, and see him marking an omission to be supplied by a claim, or a name which ought not to be there for objection, there you see the League. If you want to find its leaders, you will only have to look to the papers; as it is this week, so it will be in future weeks. You will see Bright and Cobden there, as heretofore, sometimes fighting with physical-force men at Northampton, at other times with monopolist Tories at Dudley, and frequently with wild beasts at Ephesus. The *Morning Herald* says to-day that these leaders of the League want to back out of the agitation, and that they would if they could. I suspect, by these remarks, the *Morning Herald* does not exactly understand the nature of the impossibility of their "backing out." There is a moral as well as a physical impossibility that men of clear minds and true hearts, who have put their hands to the plough, should look back. It is not in their moral being to desist from the great work that they have undertaken so long as they have life, or until the great triumph of their cause shall, through their efforts, be achieved. They talk of disunion in the League. "Disunion" and "dissolution" are terms of which here we know not the meaning.

If ever a movement showed confidence, mutual reliance, amity, and decision, it has been this Anti-Corn-Law League

agitation. In fact, it used to be charged against us, t there was too much confidence; and the monopolists w endeavouring to spirit up people here to inquire a the funds, and ascertain what had become of the 50,0 last year, and the 100,000*l.* this; and many wonderful wise insinuations were made in relation to these top Assuredly this shows no want of confidence, coming, a large portion of this fund did, from where the leader the League are best known in their personal character history. I should like to see the Anti-League evince si lar confidence, by the farmers of this country raising intrusting 150,000*l.* to his Grace the Duke of Buckingh even if he gave them his bills, those bills bearing inter and indorsed by his Grace the Duke of Richmond. I this seeming cessation of the League, from a discontinua of these meetings, those of us who live in London sho feel that a blank is left in our lives, let us, as citizen this metropolis, remember that the League came to us, that we did not in the first instance go to the League. have been recipients of the benefits, and not the origina of the League; it has called and held these meetings, if we grow impatient of the suspension or delay, the remedy for that is to call our meetings in turn, and in the League to come and see us. I really think we them a response of hospitality after all which they done for us. We owe them, in every way in which w show it, our hearty, ready, and unremitting coöperat

At the first meeting of the present season, I endea to show that the triumph of this great cause rests with the cities and large towns of the empire. I a that such a town as Birmingham should have tarn fair fame by what has recently occurred there—t who have the means of information should give th the license of employing their votes in any other wa the assertion of the rights of labour, and the ma of the commercial interests of the nation. But cumstance as this is an admonition here and eve do all that we can of the work of the day wh lasts, ever preparing for that great future electo which is to come. This is a cause of nation those interests are not decided by chance; th baseless theories, but upon the principles of a

has been distinctly traced; its principles are laid broad and deep, and the testimony of all experience is against monopoly. But it is yet more strongly opposed to war under the pretence of national benefit. I trust that the warning which was thrown out by the honourable member for Manchester this evening will sink into your minds and hearts; for when we see to what means monopoly has recourse, it is not chimerical that there should be found even that monstrous wickedness which would plunge a nation into war for the sordid interest of a class. Should such an emergency ever seem to be impending over us, I trust that the people of this country will as one man protest against the recurrence of those sanguinary doings of old which ought now to be matters of history, and of history alone.

This agitation must continue and advance, because it is founded in the extended perceptions of national interests, and is based on moral principles. It is indeed a moral question. We grant our opponents all the advantage they boast of possessing: they have enormous property and influence; Houses of Lords and Commons; a large portion of the press; the use of the post-office; the patronage of the army and navy; appointments in the Church, and its influence at their back;—they have all these, and the enumeration does not appal us: for we have against them all—what is stronger than the whole put together—the sense of justice in the human heart. There is a power with which they know not how to deal, but which will teach others how to deal with them—a power more ancient than their oldest ancestry, which existed before castles and cathedrals, Church and State—a power as old, nay, older than creation—a sacred power which existed before the pillars of the earth were laid, or the mountains were brought forth; it dwelt with wisdom in the Eternal Mind; it was breathed into man with the first breath of life; it will not perish in him until our race shall have numbered its days upon earth. To contend with it is as vain as to strive with the stars of heaven. It will witness the extinction—nay, more, it will be the agency of destruction—of all wrong in political and social institutions. Soon may Providence send that blessed consummation!

XV.

AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE.

January 15th, 1845.

THE practical measure by which the policy of the Anti-Corn-Law League is characterised in the present year is that to which Mr. Cobden has just adverted, namely, the correction of the county registration, and the enlargement of the county constituencies, by inducing the wealthy free-traders in the cities and towns to employ a portion of their surplus money, and the industrial classes in those places to invest their savings, in the purchase of 40*s*. freeholds; in the contemplation, at no great distance of time, of meeting the lords of the soil upon their own ground, of having with them a fair fight, and, as we confidently reckon, driving them from their strongholds.

This policy has excited a remarkable degree both of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in different quarters. The displeasure has been expressed by the use of the word "unconstitutional;" which, for the purpose of political displeasure, is very analogous in its use to the term "respectable" in moral praise. The late William Hazlitt, in one of his essays, says, that we never have recourse to that expression to praise any body, if there is any quality whatever by which we can designate him. If capable of making good verses, we call him a poet; if skilled in diagrams and profound in problems, we term him a mathematician: we run the whole round of qualifications, and seek for any honourable distinction whatever, and in the failure of all, we say, "Well, he is certainly a very respectable man." So in politics: when persons are annoyed by a proposed measure, if they cannot pronounce it illegal, because it violates no enactment of the laws of the land; or immoral, inasmuch as it implies no breach of the commandments; if they cannot allege that it is dishonourable in principle, and inconsistent with the conventional regulations of life, —why, they fall back upon this word "unconstitutional," which means neither more nor less but that they dislike

the thing exceedingly; and, having nothing else which they can assert against it, they say, "Well, at any rate, it is very unconstitutional." It is, however, with singular impropriety that such dispraise is applied to a policy which tends to give life to the constitution, makes it something more than a mere dead letter, enlarges its power, extends the number of those who possess its privileges, and through that extension multiplies its blessings to the community. The persons to whom the League policy imparts dissatisfaction are happily only to be found among those to whose proceedings that body is opposed, whose unjust gains or egregious blunders it seeks to bring to the standard of truth and justice. We have displeased our enemies by the course we are pursuing, but that same conduct has gratified our friends.

The case is reversed with the Central Society for the Protection of Agriculture. Whatever they may have done in facing their opponents during the last year, they have certainly succeeded in exciting the strongest dissatisfaction and reprobation of their friends. Throughout the country the cry is loud against them. Never was protection—if it really be so—more unthankfully repaid. The society say that they are set up as a safeguard to the tenant-farmer and the labourer; but throughout both classes there exists but one feeling of disappointment, annoyance, and rebuke. They held a meeting the other day, but not such an assemblage as this. They might, indeed, venture to compare theirs with ours, if every duke were counted for a thousand, and each member of parliament for one or two hundred; but their great gathering in reality numbered some forty persons. It was an annual general meeting of the great Central Society for the Protection of Agriculture, held in a room upon the first floor of a house in Bond Street. There even the members of the committee found fault with their own report, and alleged that dissatisfaction at their proceedings was general throughout the country; that the agriculturists were every where crying out that the society neither did, nor attempted to do, any thing; that they would receive no suggestions from others, nor yet originate any proceedings; that they would not go down to Manchester and hold large meetings for open discussions—I should like to see them attempting it!—that the farmers

were not getting the price of 56*s*., which was promised to be secured to them by Sir Robert Peel's Bill, as wheat had been down as low as 45*s*.

In truth, there is reason for this dissatisfaction. It proves that the Central Society has undertaken more than it can perform. It may protect the Corn Law against legislative change, but not against the workings of that higher power which interferes with the practical operation of those enactments. The Central Society for the Protection of Agriculture, with all its dukes and squires, has failed to shield monopoly against the dispensations of Providence. It has been unable to preserve the farmers from the calamity of a good harvest, or show itself strong enough to avert what it strangely deems the plague of plenty and the curse of cheapness. The endeavour has not been wanting; but such is the success which attempts of this description deserve. We seek not to please persons of this class by the proceedings of the League. We would not needlessly annoy them; if there be annoyance to any persons, the fault is their own. We cannot separate monopoly from the monopolist, nor sophistry from the sophist; they are bound too closely together.

The upholders of these unjust laws, whatever be their standing in the country, or their dignity of station—if they persist in clinging to these evils, and engaging in a mad struggle against the rights of mankind, the tendencies of the age, and even the dispensations of Providence—must expect defeat and disgrace. Mortification awaits them; they see the shadow of the coming events in these efforts to enlarge the constituencies of counties: that is to say, in fact, to create what the counties have not at present,—independent constituencies. They know how much their own power has arisen out of the large extent of country of which they go to parliament as the representatives; they have a foreboding that it will not do long, should they be shaken in those seats, to fall back upon the little boroughs. They feel the humbling position in which they must be placed, when, lords and dictators of these vast provinces, they are unhorsed from their power, and are taught to give way to those who recommend themselves to the general voice by their adhesion to the common principles of right and justice. The counties have been their heavy artillery;

the pocket-boroughs without them will be worth no more than so many pocket-pistols; and when the League has carried their cannon, do they think to make the fight good with their popguns? They must submit to drink the cup of humiliation, which an obstinate retention of these laws is mixing for their lips; and with the humiliation must come loss also—not merely of the proceeds of the bread-tax, but other things beside—if they persevere in holding by that tax until the result be that their political influence vanishes.

Their ascendency in the state is at peril in this conflict; it can only be saved by a timely compromise; and they know well enough that their land is worth to them, politically, much more than it is simply in an agricultural or commercial sense. It is not only wheat and barley that they seek from their acres; other things are grown there,—offices, salaries, red-coats and commissions in the army, preferment in the Church, gowns and surplices, are cultivated there peacefully together. They have long had the undisputed gathering in of this vast harvest; and it is surely a species of infatuation, by which they are now perilling the whole, in vainly endeavouring to retain this imposition on the food of the people,—a taxation which no nation, conscious of its own power, can possibly submit to, or regard otherwise than as a burden wrongfully bound upon it, which every effort is to be put forth to shake off on the very first opportunity.

Of all the undignified endings of a potent body, I think the humbling of the aristocracy of Great Britain for the sake of the bread-tax would be one of the most preposterous. The old *noblesse* of France fell in defence of monarchy; the aristocracy of Poland sacrificed themselves for the sake of nationality: but to go after them into the gulf of insignificance and oblivion on such a score as this—for the aristocracy of Great Britain to sacrifice its power and greatness in order to tax the poor man's loaf—would be the most "lame and impotent conclusion" that ever followed a long and brilliant story. Such an extinction and humiliation would reflect no lustre on their memories in the page of history; it would gain no monumental honours or records. A foreigner, a little while ago, visited Westminster Abbey, thinking he should be permitted to inspect the monuments

in the same manner as those in foreign cathedrals are looked at; but, after having gone the round, the verger demanded 15*d.* of him. The foreigner hesitated a little. "Why," said the man in office, by way of argument, "I have shown you the monuments of the greatest portion of the aristocracy of England." "Have you?" said the foreigner; "why, then, I would give you half-a-crown if you would complete the collection." But no mingling with the illustrious of former times will await an aristocracy martyred in the cause of the bread-tax. The only fitting memorial even for those who boast—like the Dukes of Buckingham and Richmond—of royal blood in their veins, would be some old empty warehouse, where, in the days of the Corn Law, bonded wheat was locked up, while multitudes were starving around. Such should be the monumental pile of the descendants of the Stuarts and the Plantagenets.

They say something else, however, in reproach, besides adopting this word "unconstitutional." The report of the Central Protection Society declares, that the leaders of the League use "all means" for the accomplishment of their ends. I humbly submit that this is something of a mistake. No; we do not use "all means." We never send people scouring the country, in order to gather a meeting together. We have no occasion for *dilettante* charioteers to drive dirty demagogues in dog-carts, in order that they may pass for peasantry upon the hustings. We do not use "all means." We do not garble Adam Smith, neither do we falsify quotations, nor repeat the practice after a promise has been made of revision and correction. We do not use "all means." We do not promise that the people shall have cheap bread within a given time, and then leave them to grumble over a very different price from that which was put forth in our prospectus. We do not use "all means." We do not, in a collective capacity, declare that it is very improper indeed to interfere in elections, that it is contrary to all our principles, that the most rigid abstinence shall be maintained; and then, whenever the occasion offers, employ all the dirtiest tricks of bribery and the most abominable arts of intimidation. No; we do not employ "all means." If her Majesty—God bless her!—will but come to the Free-Trade Bazaar next May, in this building—and

though I do not expect her to take a stall there, I believe it would call forth a very grateful acclamation from her people if she did—she will behold honourable specimens of the industry of the country in all its branches; deserving not only justice, but the noblest praises that royal feeling can bestow: and she will not see there such tricks as sometimes are to be met with at a cattle-show, when a roarer wins the prize by being passed for an Arabian.

Instead of employing "all means," the League leaves such as these, and others of a similar description, making a fair partition with the antagonistic society, they taking those which are most in harmony with their ends, we choosing those which are most accordant with our purposes,—remembering that they are banded for the defence of an interest, we are leagued for the assertion of a principle. If it be only meant "all means" which may become a man to use, why, then, accusation vanishes, and the fact is correctly stated. The leaders of the League have shown themselves men who will, in these circumstances, use "all means;" who will spare no time or labour, but undertake whatever the powers of the human body and mind are equal to, in the promotion of this great work; who seem to have consecrated to it their very lives, and will earn their honourable niche in history by the unceasing perseverance, the gigantic effort, the honourable virtue, the lofty and just principles, in which they have pursued this great object, and will bring it, I trust, before long, to a triumphant termination.

It is a satisfactory characteristic of the cause of Free Trade, that in all its successive phases, and in every stage of its progress, there has not only been a good end pursued, but just means employed; and the beneficial results produced by the operation might themselves be ranked as among the noblest objects of persevering endeavour. It has been thus from the very first. How did it commence? With such speculations as those of Adam Smith and other political economists. The cause of Free Trade was then enshrined in scientific volumes; it was an intellectual discovery. The talent and power of the philosopher were employed to make a science of that which theretofore had been a mere chaos of isolated facts. They accomplished this; but they did not realise Free Trade for the country

by so doing, because legislators are not chosen for their knowledge of the science of national prosperity; and at that time the disregard of the seminaries of education, and the different tastes which prevailed in both Houses of Parliament, made senators altogether heedless of any such study as that of political economy.

The next stage in the process was, that from a science it became a policy. Principles were wrought out into their details, and applied to the practical concerns of the country. Exhibition was made gradually, in different directions, of the way in which trade and commerce were affected. For this change let us never forget how largely we are indebted to the pages of the *Westminster Review*, and to the writings of the author of the *Corn-Law Catechism*. That noble veteran in our cause, Colonel Thompson—soon may he fight the battle again on the floor of the House of Commons!—may be said to have accomplished this stage of the process almost single-handed; to have advanced the politico-economical science into a national policy: but still without result on the legislature, for it was not one of the watch-words of party. Whig and Tory hoisted their old banners, held their review days as of yore, and fought out battles of much more importance to themselves than to any other persons whatever through the length and breadth of the country. But a third phase was advancing, when a new form was taken—that of the interest of a class; an important class, but still only a class.

The third stage of Free Trade was when the great manufacturers began to feel the shoe pinch them; monopoly interfered with the extension of their operations, prospects, and profits; and they, beginning to be uneasy under this load, forwarded the cause another stage. Whether any of the present leaders of the League first felt it in this particular way, I cannot undertake to say; if they did, we know how soon their views expanded, and their minds arose towards a nobler contemplation of the subject. But through this stage it had to pass; an ineffectual one still, for there was another and a mightier class to interpose its veto upon any thing which they would have had adopted for their relief.

Then came the stage for which we are indebted to the Anti-Corn-Law League, and the efforts of those true-

hearted men, so many of whom are before you on this occasion, and who have their coadjutors in the country, who made it a popular appeal, and first called on the inhabitants of the towns and cities to consider this matter, to see its bearing on the common weal, to decide on the right and justice of the case, and to say whether this system of things was to be prolonged with their consent, or was entitled to their endurance. What was this but a great national institution? It was a system, at first, of the communication of knowledge, much of which was altogether new to those who came together to be instructed; they had many of them to learn the very elements of that political economy which is now so familiar to their minds. They had to be formed and trained; and the result has been a clear conviction and a firm determination.

But the monopolist landowners make fight still, even in the face of these great bodies of the people; and therefore the leaders of the League have given the word, "March onward," to gain another and a yet higher step, to make this great battle in the counties throughout the whole extent of the land, to arrive thus at the public mind, and then to take decisive measures that the national will shall become the law of the empire. And if of all the previous stages it may be said that they were a public good, preëminently may it be so stated of that which is now in the course of being realised.

The endeavour which is making to enlarge the county constituencies, and especially by the qualified votes of intelligent Free-Trade residents in towns, and of the industrious classes in particular, is, in every view of it, an important benefit in itself, even were it not the path through which we must pass to the repeal of the Corn Laws. For what is it but to make county representation a reality? County elections are what the Duke of Wellington once called county meetings, a mere "farce." They are the result of the distribution of property, and the votes are reckoned upon according to the number of tenant-farmers on the different estates throughout the district. There you have them all beforehand. When the property passes from one party to another, the votes are transferred with it. They may be all marked out upon the map of the county. They should be so; we should have something

like those very instructive geological maps, which, by the different colourings of the districts, tell us what mineral wealth lies hid beneath; and there is something analogous, I conceive, to a geological distribution. Had we such a map, the dark line that designates the bed of coal below would show where black monopoly was working in its deep recesses. The indication that petrified remains were in abundance, might suggest to us that there would be the place to dig up and to excavate the fossil Whigs, with their fixed duty, remains of an antediluvian world. In another direction, the soft alluvial deposit might suggest the yielding clay of the ministerial followers; whilst, to the eye of scientific observation, it would be plain that beneath all this was that central fire of which geologists tell us, intense and enduring as the principles of human nature, and which, at the appointed time, raises the lowest strata from their humble position, shatters down the higher granite, though it be of an older creation than any Norman nobility, and produces a new surface of things, where those that were unseen, scorned, and disregarded, become a fresh world of order, enjoyment, harmony, and beauty.

We are a League for the transformation of county voters into realities; for delivering them from the district dictatorship to which they are now subjected. And this is to be done by infusing the life-blood of city thought and independence into the constituencies. Bring the independent into contact with the dependent. Lay the factory alongside of the farmhouse. Let those who have been enslaved, even in the tone and spirit of their minds, be shamed by their friends and neighbours, who take a more decisive part in this matter. Let them perceive that there is for them a protective power. Surely, friends, neighbours, customers—those who purchase the produce of their soil—have some title to their care and confidence; for who is the best friend to the farmer, the man who pays him money for his corn, or the man who takes his money for a rent calculated on monopolist prices? They call this "the interference of strangers." There is an absurd way of speaking of the League as "a stranger" every where. It is a stranger nowhere. It has domesticated itself here in London; but "the League" is every one whose mind sees clearly, and whose heart beats strongly for, the principles

and the cause of Free Trade. We are the League in London; and if we look abroad into the different towns and districts of the country, wherever there are men who see the real interests of the nation, who feel for the wrongs of the poor, who rise up against oppression, and say, "These taxes on the bread of the indigent shall not continue," why, they are the League—the League is there. When my Lord Ducie or Radnor rises in his place to address his fellow-peers, why, then the League is in the House of Lords. When by any chance, however remote, a courageous thought shall arise in the mind of the premier, and an honest determination on this matter come from his mouth amongst his colleagues, then the League will be in the cabinet. Principles of this nature are like the air or the water—they have an elemental omnipresence. They are wherever there is the light of thought and the warmth of feeling.

Besides, as to county representation, are not towns and cities part and parcel of counties? Are they foreign countries? Are they "aliens in blood, language, or religion"? Are not most counties made by the towns and cities which are in them? Do they not rise as the crown of the richness and fertility of the more productive counties? Where there is no such fertility, but mineral treasures exist below the surface, or ports and harbours are found along the coast, why, there towns and cities make counties by a work almost to be compared with that of creation, giving them numbers, wealth, grandeur, and importance, which Nature seems to have forgotten or overlooked. What would Middlesex be, if you were to strike London out of it? Nay, what would the most rural counties be, if you were to take from them the advantage of towns, if not in them, at least in their vicinity, and within an easy reach? The counties separate from, and independent of, the towns! Do we not buy their wheat, even at their own monopolist prices? Do we not very often indeed feed their poor who seek refuge here; employ their idle and superfluous hands, and give a shelter to their victims? And, besides all this, do we not purchase their game?

Towns and cities are the hearts of counties—the last portion of them that should be left unrepresented. If it should be said they have their own separate representation, I reply, that is not all. It is property that is repre-

sented, according to the theory of the law under which we live; and wherever there are freeholds which produce 40*s.* a year, there the constitution supposes—and by supposing requires and demands of us, if we are patriots—that there should be a corresponding vote also. Your 40*s.* freehold is not represented by the city and town members; it has yet its claim to make. Well is it when that claim can be urged with such happy results as promise to attend it in the present instance. For in this plan there is a moral good beyond, perhaps, what in its original conception was thought of. It tends to act upon the character of the entire labouring population of the country—the working classes—the more toilsome section of the middle classes; it holds out to them a hope, promise, and incitement of the most desirable and elevating description. It says to them, "Become proprietors of a portion, however small, of this our England; have a stake in the country; be something here."

It was thought a wise thing when, by the measure introduced by the late George Rose, the savings'-bank funds were connected with the public funds of the country; it was deemed judicious in this way to link those who could amass but very small sums with national institutions and public interests. And if it was wise and good to endeavour to make all who could save their pittance become fund-holders, it must be at least as prudent and just to induce them, according to their proportion, to become landholders also, joint shareholders in this lovely and fruitful and beautiful country—and their country as much as that of the wealthiest nobleman whose lands cover half a county. It gives them a tangible bond of connection with society; a feeling of independence and honest pride. They are put in the position which was deemed necessary to citizenship in the republics of ancient days; and this is adapted to cherish in them the emotions which best accord with consistency, propriety, and dignity of character. The poet Campbell has described the feelings of the outcast when he wanders through the village—how he looks wistfully at the cottage, with its little garden; leans on the gate, and says to himself:

> "Oh! that for me some home like this might smile,
> Some hamlet's shade, to yield my sickly form
> Health in the breeze, and shelter from the storm!"

To those whose lives are spent in toilsome exertion and constant endurance, but who can take time so far by the forelock as to accumulate a little sum, such hope and promise as this does the present plan hold out and offer as an incitement. May their spirit arise to aspire towards and seize it; and obtaining it, I think we shall be on the high-road towards a better choice of legislators, a more complete identification of the interests of those who toil with the advantages of those who think,—a better identification of the different classes that extend themselves through the demarcations of society; and our House of Commons will then be in a fair way to show what it is to have a full, fair, and free representation of the commons of England.

You have had well dissected this evening the constituent elements of a great financier; and you have heard something of the prosperity of the revenue. I have a notion that the revenue is prosperous when more money remains in our own pockets, rather than when more is taken out. This comparative prosperity—for it is only such—has falsified every assertion of monopoly, and verified all the predictions of the leaders of the League. We rejoice that there is such a comparative prosperity; but yet, how far has it gone towards decreasing the miseries and the endurance of a very large portion of the community? Take up the daily newspapers, and I defy you to look at them many days in succession without meeting again and again with coroners' inquests on deaths by destitution; poor wretches perishing upon a bundle of straw in a corner of a hovel, where they have scarcely had any nutriment for days or weeks. Whilst there are such scenes as these, it is not for our efforts to relax, or for us to bate one jot of heart or hope in this great struggle, but still to press right onwards.

There is another testimony to the fearful amount of misery that yet remains untouched, in the different societies which are continually forming; societies, as you have heard, for grinding and baking bread for the poor; for furnishing them with baths and wash-houses; for setting them to work; putting them into better dwellings; and societies for relieving the wants of the poor needlewomen. The leaders of the League have sometimes been blamed

because they were thought to look coldly at these efforts; they have been accused of a sort of jealousy, or an indifferent feeling towards the wants of the poor, as though they must be careless about them unless they entered into these specific modes of attempted relief; the fact being that they were not less anxious than any of the promoters of those societies for the removal of the mischiefs of which they complained; but they saw at the same time that, as national measures for relief, these were mere pretensions, so miserably inefficient that they were scarcely worth a thought, whilst the great battle was to be sustained as that which alone could reach the root of the evil, and banish it from the country. It was their sympathy with, and not their want of feeling for, the poor that occasioned this mode of adverting to such exertions.

But allow me to say that those who were so quick in detecting in the Free-Traders what they represented as hostile to humane attempts, might, if they had looked elsewhere, have seen a real collision with the object of these societies; for while there are societies for all these purposes, there is also an association for rendering the poor needlewomen unable to buy more than three-fourths of the bread which they might otherwise purchase; for making the poor spend so much upon food that they cannot buy a stock of linen to go to the wash; a society which so interferes with the rights and wants of the poor, that they lose all heart and desire of putting themselves into a better habitation; there is a society that directly tends to diminish the amount of work for the poor, to curtail their employment, and deteriorate the worth of that employment. There is an antagonist society to all these professedly benevolent institutions; and that is the Central Society for keeping up the taxation upon bread. They are the parties that ought to be accused by those who are so much addicted to these special modes of charity. On their heads should the thunderbolt fall. They should be put upon their trial, and not the leaders of the League. The League on their trial, indeed! Why, Providence has given them their trial, and they have stood it bravely and triumphantly. They have summered and wintered this great cause. They have been earnest for it in times of heaviest suffering, and in periods of comparative prosperity.

They have pleaded it in the Legislature, and before assemblages of tremendous multitudes; they have been, to use an apostolic phrase, "instant in season and out of season." Every time to them has been a season for striving to advance this great cause of justice and charity. They are not merely acquitted, but are deserving of all honour for these proceedings.

It is another party who are upon their trial; it is the moral courage of the premier that is upon trial, and his disposition to carry into practice his own professed principles. It is the constitution of our country that is upon trial, in order to ascertain whether it furnishes the means of redress for this great and pervading wrong. It is the spirit, the energy, and the determination of the British people that is upon trial, to see whether it will hold out until it shall do itself this right, and put down the oppressions of a class. They call themselves a protection society; why, we are a protection society too, although antithetically distinguished from them. They are an association for the protection of the rich and powerful; we, for that of the needy and the helpless. They are a society for the protection of high prices of food; we, for the protection of the highest worth of wages. They are a society for the protection of indolence and of rent; we, for the encouragement of industry and of enterprise. They are a society for the protection of a demoralising, degrading, and destructive system; we, for that of universal right, justice, and charity.

No. XVI.

AT THE FREE-TRADE HALL, MANCHESTER.

March 6th, 1845.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen,--Fifteen months ago I had the gratification of finding myself in this place, face to face with the men of Manchester, amongst whom originated this greatest movement of modern times. In that period there may not have been any triumph of a stupendous description; certainly there has been no disastrous defeat. Nor, on the principle on which the Anti-Corn-Law League is constructed, was either one or the other to be anticipated. We work by wit, and not by witchcraft; and the leaders of the League were much too wise and too honest either to expect a miracle or to plan a revolution. It was no scheme of theirs,- as a right hon. baronet, a member of the late administration, once suggested,—it was no scheme of theirs, even with their most excited meetings, to call on the multitude to march and pull the members by their ears out of St. Stephen's Chapel, and souse them in the Thames. Their purposes were very different from any thing of this sort; their action was upon mind, their reliance upon the omnipotence of truth. But these months have not been unmarked; the progress of enlightened opinion and of firm determination upon this great matter has been distinct throughout the country. There has been no flagging of zeal in any locality whatever. As previous suffering had not disheartened the people too much for the exertion, neither has the prosperity of the last few months turned them aside.

In your Athenæums and your projected parks you had not forgotten for one moment the Anti-Corn-Law League and its objects, or the efforts which it demands. You feel in your own minds its growing strength. The nation feels and recognises its evidence in the House of Commons itself,--the last place to show the results of a movement. Yet there, who does not perceive in the present session that the tone and style of the leaders of political parties

have undergone a material change; that we find deference where once there was superciliousness; that the treasury bench looks on not haughtily, whilst the leader of the opposition declares that protection is the bane of agriculture? A higher standing has assuredly been achieved for the friends of Free Trade, as opposed to the friends of scarcity, in the legislature of the country. That indication is valuable for the very reason that more slowly than in any other class does the progress of knowledge and of truth act upon that body; the House of Commons marks time like a septennial clock, that only strikes at long intervals. When the hands do begin to move forward, however, it is with a sort of jump, and not with the steady progress that marks the advance of truth amongst the people; and we may anticipate that on this matter, as on that of Catholic Emancipation and some other topics,—whilst year after year we are tauntingly asked, how many votes have you got?—how many votes have you changed?—that at last will come all at once the word of command from head-quarters, to "right-about-face!" The ground will be cleared, and we shall find that what they have been for whole years denouncing as the ruin of the constitution and the agriculture of the kingdom,—we shall find them enlightened on the essential importance of Free Trade, and declaring that it is the only national policy which such an empire can adopt.

However it may be in the legislature, the symptoms of progress are decided enough every where else. They are evident, not only in the immense numbers that attend meetings, both here, in the cradle of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and at those meetings in London, which have gone on to such an unparalleled extent; but they are not less distinct in the character than in the multitudinousness of the meetings. They are marked by no sudden outbreaks of popular enthusiasm; they are drawn together by no unreasoning appeals to passion and vindictiveness; but they are pervaded throughout by that high character of intelligence which is the surest presage of a coming change in the direction to which intelligence points. Why, in these meetings, those who had only been accustomed to assemblies of the people some few years ago, would be perfectly astonished at the topics that are introduced, at the course

of argument that is pursued, at the recondite matters which are familiarly discussed, and which are evidently understood, appreciated, and dealt with by the largest assemblies. You may hear at such meetings disquisitions on differential duties and points of political economy, which have been judged entirely inappropriate for any large gathering, even of the most educated classes. And yet the hearers follow the speakers distinctly and clearly, with full understanding and conviction throughout the discussion, showing that a new state of things has arrived, and that, whatever may be thought of the ultimate objects and ultimate triumphs of the League, and its incidental course, it has done a good unequalled by any former agitation,—that it has done a good which it was not imagined any agitation whatever could accomplish. It has stimulated the mind of the country,—it has informed the mind of the country. It has been the creator of light and intellect, and by the power thus brought into being its ultimate objects will assuredly be achieved. Why, it is enough to make the bones of Adam Smith rattle rejoicingly in his grave to see the topics these meetings have discussed. And so long as this is the case,—while this great schoolmaster is abroad,—we may feel that good, immeasurable good, is in store for our country; we may feel that not merely the purposes of this League, but every purpose that is connected with the march of the national mind, is advancing towards its accomplishment; that the dominion of sophistry, that the reign of humbug, is over,—over for ever in this country.

No legislator or professed statesman will in future dare to try the cajolery that has been practised in past times, when he knows that the flimsiness of his arguments will instantly be seen through, that his insufficient arguments will have their speciousness detected. He will feel that his best interest is to be honest, because he has to deal with a development of mind that is no longer to be paltered with. At the termination of the great European conflict, one of our poets rejoiced that the *prestige* of violence and military glory was over,—that it was gone. The *prestige* of official sophistry is rapidly following that of military glory. Its time for exacting blind homage is gone also, or rapidly going, under the influence of the proceedings of the League. And we may say of triumphant chancellors of the ex-

chequer, and their annual statements—full as they used to be of glozing fraud and falsehood—we may say of them as we say of the sword and the general's truncheon:

> "That spell upon the minds of men
> Breaks never to unite again;"

and the same of the feeling that led them to adore

> "That pagod thing that budgets sway,
> With front of brass and feet of clay."

Dead by the reports of its enemies over and over again, the League shows that it is yet alive for the exposure of sophistry in every form, and for the advancement of its objects by the most important and influential means,—those of knowledge, truth, and reason. And even if it were as comparatively inert as sometimes—the wish being father to the thought—it has been represented; even if our meetings were not gatherings of power, but actually no more than the theatrical amusements which have occasionally been described with a sneer,—still, I say that, even as amusements, they would at least bear comparison with the favourite amusements or sports of the most exalted classes in this country. Why, take our meetings here, or at Covent-Garden Theatre, or other places, to be only a gratification, let them be only a form,—they are not of that sort that costs the public two millions and a half per annum. They are not a sport in which of every fifteen persons that have a title to the amusement there is found one person who has his mittimus thereby. There is no such proportion between the evil and the enjoyment in this instance as there is in those with which it might be brought into comparison. It would be a pretty thing, indeed, if for every meeting of 6000 people—and how many such meetings has the League held?—there were to be 400 men sent to gaol!

It would be a pretty thing, indeed, if 4500 persons were convicted for crimes perpetrated in consequence of the Anti-Corn-Law League meetings; that being about the number of those committed and punished for offences under the game-laws connected with the sport I refer to. If our amusements had any such results, any such attendant mischiefs, why, the whole world would have been up in a fer-

ment about them; there would have been an instantaneous cry, "Put it down!" What an opening of letters there would be at the Post-Office! What beautiful correct copies would be engraved of a certain seal, with a wheat-sheaf in the middle of it, and "Anti-Corn-Law League" round the rim of it! What an outcry there would be for immediate proceedings, a committee of inquiry; and then, if such a committee were proposed, a committee of inquiry into the amusements of the League, like to that which a gentleman here present has obtained into the other. And suppose on that occasion any leading member of the League were to get up and say: "True, there are great enormities; we must give way to this committee; and I hope it will be seen and noted on the other side the example we set of a ready acquiescence in this inquiry into our private enjoyments. Why, such a mode of treatment would be received with roars of laughter by the honourable House; and something more markedly censuring than roars of laughter would follow the statement of any minister who then should get up and say: "He did not mean to oppose this committee, having previously consulted with the leading members of the League, and found that they were disposed to concede the measure." Now, really, the good done by proceedings which too many are disposed to reprobate, and the evil attendant on amusements for which so much indulgence is claimed, offer a contrast, ridiculous or melancholy according to the point of view we look at it in, but of which we may at least say this,—that if the amusements of pursuing game be important to secure the residence of the gentry, the amusements of our Anti-Corn-Law meetings are important to the very existence of industry as its thrift and enjoyment.

In the interval which has elapsed since I had the pleasure of meeting you here on a former occasion, that great step in the progress of the League has been determined upon and authorised, of the emancipation of the counties, —their electoral emancipation,—the most important movement connected with this great agitation that has yet been adopted. It is in effect giving to counties political existence; for what are the counties without towns in them, by whose industry they are aggrandised, and by whose wants their products are disposed of? Towns are an essen-

tial portion, a vital portion, of counties. They are the beating hearts of those large tracts of land, without which, politically, they are but little worth. What would South Lancashire be without Manchester and Liverpool,—what Yorkshire without Leeds and Sheffield,—what Middlesex without London? Why, representation, without giving these their full weight, the weight of their property, their intelligence, their zeal, would be worse than *Hamlet* with the part of Hamlet cut out of the tragedy: it would be like a representation of the oceans that encompass our islands, in which the shoals and sands of the shore were depicted, Great Britain itself being altogether omitted.

Our plan has sometimes been called unconstitutional. What does the epithet mean? Is not the 40*s*. freehold vote one of the very oldest portions of our constitution? Is it not a right that has been handed down through a long succession of reigns and of centuries, from the time of Henry VII. at least? Has it not been the unquestionable purpose long before that, has it not been the very meaning of the constitution, that whoever realises so much worth of land becomes thereby, for political purposes, part and parcel of the county, and that without his share in the representation that representation is imperfect? Instead of being unconstitutional, it is that which gives the constitution existence, makes it something better than a dead letter, and calls into being political right in the hands which are best disposed to use it efficiently and practically. It was said in long past years, by a fanatic, of ancient institutions, "Perish commerce, so the constitution lives!" The language of the League is the converse of this, and by this movement you say, "Up, commerce, and make the constitution live!" You raise it from the very dead, for it has been in a sleep as profound as that of death in the county representation, and bid it "come forth and live!" You animate it, and bid it go on with power and strength, and make itself the agency, not of party spirit, but of national grandeur and prosperity.

Well, during that period too the enemy has not been idle. There has been the Anti-League beating up its recruits, accomplishing its regeneration, meeting, not in a hall like this, but assembling on a first floor of a house, No. 17 in New Bond Street. They had a very fine annual

meeting there, it is said; several chairs in the drawing-room may have been left unoccupied, but still altogether it was a good gathering; and yet even in that assembly there were tenant-farmers found to read a lecture to the ducal farmers' friends, and to tell them something of their mind as to the promises which had been made to them for a time, and the halting performance which had followed those promises. Well, their leaders told them to be as quiet as possible. They selected a land-agent to speak for the tenant-farmers, and proposed, as to other matters, that they should have a dinner, and at that dinner they should drink the labourers' health, but not in water only. There they have concocted their pamphlets, made their beautifully correct quotations from Adam Smith, settled their proceedings for a campaign, in which, after having gone through exertions of this kind, after having presided at various meetings in the country, after having gathered together 500 labourers in clean smock-frocks and with green ribbons round their hats, to shout before the Queen and impress her with the comfort of the peasantry,—after all this the Duke of Buckingham and the Duke of Richmond each feels he can lay his hand upon his heart and say, "Have I not done all that I can as a man and a monopolist?"

However, although they still murmur among themselves, and still tell the country that they must needs have protection on account of their peculiar burdens, we perceive no great eagerness to come forward and distinctly prove to the world what these burdens are. They like the farce,—it answers a purpose; but as to going into particulars, and making out the case, that is quite another thing. They are of opinion, with the sentimental lady in the play of *The Stranger*:

> "I have a silent sorrow here, a grief I'll ne'er impart;
> It breathes no sigh, it sheds no tear,
> But it consumes my heart."

Such is their secret burden; they will tell nobody of it; but whether it consumes their hearts or not, it seems, at any rate, not hitherto to have consumed their pockets.

No; I do not mean to deny that the land has peculiar burdens; and I should say that, first and foremost, the land of this country is burdened with the most exorbitant proprietary of any country in the world. England has been

rightly named the paradise of landowners. There is no country in Europe where so small a proportion of the general taxation of the country is borne by the land as in Great Britain. There is no country in Europe where the proprietors of the land have the opportunity, by means of political power which their possessions confer, to put their hands into the pockets of other people, and where they use that power with so unsparing and unmerciful a prodigality. That is the first great and peculiar burden of the land in England,—the rent is double now what it was some forty or fifty years ago,—more than double generally throughout the country. The burden has thus been increased, is increased enormously; and every well-wisher to the land will feel that it ought to be diminished. Another burden of the land is the weight of misery which it bears upon its bosom. It is like a fainting mother, with a child which she cannot nourish; mourning and groans are continually heard, and the unhappy beings who are willing and ready to till the soil for a very scanty portion of its produce go here and there begging for leave to work, too seldom getting it; and when they do get it, upon most starvation terms, they continually feel themselves in a dilemma between the workhouse and the suicide of destitution.

Now, this is the burden of the land; and if the poet, in the exercise of his imaginative faculties, were to conceive the earth as endowed with reason and feeling, he would imagine it to bring forth bitter remonstrances. The free air would say, "I flow for all; I yield the measure which I can give of life and well-being to every organised existence." The sun would say, "I shine for all; my light gladdens the pauper in his hovel as well as the noble in his palace." But whilst the air breathes for all, and the sun and stars shine for all, the earth does not bear its fruits for all; they are made artificially scarce, dear, and inaccessible to a large proportion of those by whose labour they are produced. And then a seeming curse is laid upon the earth from which the other elements may claim exemption. Yes, the land has to bear the burden of an unnatural complicity in crime and wretchedness; for it is made the pretext for all these. There are those who support a monopolist system, who undertake to feed the country, and fail in the attempt, and yet endeavour to exclude the foreign

nations, and set up the vain plea of independence,—as if any nation could be independent of others,—as if it did not render them the less independent of us! yet they say it is all for the sake of the land. They keep down the peasantry; they make the farmer pay rent out of his capital, opening only before him the melancholy prospect of declining resources, crippling his energies, stopping his enterprise; and they say it is all for the sake of the land. They fix barriers to trade, and limit the markets for commerce; they press heavily upon manufacturing industry; they alienate this country from other countries; and they say it is all for the sake of the land,—the innocent land, which abjures it all. It is for their own sordid sakes. It is the work of the government over which they tyrannise; it is no ordinance of nature; it is Peel, and not Providence; it is not God, but government.

Another topic which has risen into importance during these last fifteen months, is that which has been so ably and amply adverted to by your chairman in his opening address; I mean the bazaar which is soon to be held in Covent-Garden Theatre, and which partakes of that simplicity, breadth, and grandeur which has characterised so many of the proceedings of the Anti-Corn-Law League. It is of itself an argument—it will be a most imposing argument to the senses—this exhibition of the products of the national industry, this display of what manufacturing power and skill and taste can achieve in the variety and in the magnificence which will there be exhibited. But where will space be found for the exhibition? Why, Covent-Garden Theatre!—scarcely London itself would suffice for the full display of such an exhibition of the labours, of the products of manufacturing industry, as one would wish to see accumulated on that occasion. And even then, how imperfect it would be! Show the deeds of industry,—of British industry; arrange its trophies: why, not all the space of London would suffice for any thing of that sort. Nor would you have it in such goods as can be carted, or wagoned, or boated to the metropolis; why, to exhibit British industry in its whole magnificence, you should remove Manchester bodily to London. We should have up your long lines of buildings—your palaces; we should have up your ample factories; we should have up your capacious warehouses;

we should have from other places their docks, their shipping; we should gather together all that has been done by the power that raises temples, towers, and palaces; furnishing them with all the adornments of luxury, and with all the splendour of grandeur. Bring all these together, and then let Industry point to them, and say: "These are my works; how long shall legislation interfere with my recompense?" Oh, that we could have, not only the products, but the men that made the products too! Our great industrial army,—the noblest army ever raised,—the most varied, the most magnificent in its bloodless triumphs, the most glorious of armies! Would that we could have it there, with all its ensigns of industry, with all its trophies of success! Why, no processions of royal and titled personages, with all their crowns and coronets, their sceptres, robes, and helmets, no military march of battalions that have won the bloodiest fields, with their resounding music and their flaunting banners, could possibly compete in moral grandeur with that stupendous procession, that exhibition of the might with which man is enriched through his intelligence and his vigour, acting for the noblest results, and ruling effectually over the very elements of nature for the benefit of humanity.

I am certain monopoly could never compete with that exhibition; no, not though there were borne in procession coffers filled with all the wealth the bread tax ever realised,—not though nobles were there, not only with their insignia of state, but with their attendants who grace their amusements also,—not though there were Corn-Law dukes and peers, with their huntsmen and whippers-in, with their very hounds,—not though all the game they had slaughtered could be raised from the dead, and they could proceed in stately march, every man heading what he had destroyed in a battue, his hundred hares and his two hundred pheasants. The very paltriness in comparison would sweep them away into utter insignificance; it would render more striking the grandeur and the glory of British industry,—that industry to which the ancients, in their idolatrous enthusiasm, would have raised temples, to which they would have built altars, offering sacrifices, with the songs of the poet and the exhibitions of the drama; and for which, in our Christian times, we seek no such homage, but merely

demand appreciation, merely cry out for bare justice, merely say, "Here we are, the representatives of industry; we have done all this; and do we not deserve, not titles or honours, but the bread untaxed which we earn by the sweat of our brow?"

But it may be said, and is said, that we are better off than we were, that the season has been favourable, that here and elsewhere there is a considerable revival of trade, and that with this we should be content. I scarcely think the time is come to be contented yet. There have been concessions, no doubt; the late alteration in the tariff has made a good many; but still nothing must be multiplied a vast number of times before it amounts to any thing substantial. In the goods exonerated from duty there are "greaves," which I am told are useful for feeding dogs. Now, if the food of dogs is to be imported free of duty, what a shame it is that that of labouring men is to be so heavily taxed! The little obstacles are giving way to Free-Trade principles; we want to see the great ones giving way also. In this variety of movements with the smallest items of the list, there is an encouragement to push the argument for consistency yet more strenuously with those who hold the reins of power.

Sir Robert Peel professes Free-Trade principles; repeatedly and distinctly has he professed them. We cannot then let him off with any such minute application as he is making in all these operations. We cannot allow him to boast of it much, to come pompously forward and say what he is doing for the country. The littleness of the doings will warrant no boast, whilst there is so serious a deficiency in the carrying out of those very principles. This magniloquence only reminds one of that late facetious character, of theatrical notoriety, Robert Elliston. When he was the manager of Drury-Lane Theatre, some great tragedian exceedingly pleased him by his performance one night. Elliston, in his pompous way, marched into the green-room when the play was over; there, amid the assembled company, he called the successful tragedian before him; he made a sounding speech to him, telling him how gratified he had been by the able personation of that evening, how it drew tears and excited clamours of applause, and wound up by saying, it had so impressed him that he could not

feel he had discharged his duty without showing his appreciation by presenting him with a small piece of plate, and accordingly he handed to the flattered tragedian—a silver toothpick! Now, Sir Robert Peel's Free-Trade performances are very much like this small piece of plate—they amount to but very little; and our answer to them all is, that we take them as pledges of principle, and not as satisfaction of our demands; we thank him for the little toothpick, but we are determined to have the dinner also.

Whilst there is so much reason for rejoicing in the prosperity which there has been for a time in manufactures, I find also ample warrant for saying this does not satisfy us. For look, after all, at the limitations of the prosperity. It has been comparative, it is not absolute; it may be as much as the present system will allow,—it is not so much as the interests of the country or the claims of humanity require. Why, in this prosperity of ours, what does Sir James Graham tell us? That, last year, 1,500,000 persons received more or less relief from the poor-rates. One person out of every fifteen, in a state of prosperity, as it is called, receiving relief; 200 millions of pounds expended on the poor since the conclusion of a general peace! Why, we might ask, did one not know how these matters were effected,—one might ask, if this be prosperity, in the name of Heaven, what is our adversity and calamity? We still hear, too, of deaths by destitution; many cases have I noticed lately of suicide from destitution. And so long as any reports of this kind, or any facts of this description, exist in the country, you cannot say there is such prosperity as any heart can be satisfied with that is not deadened in its whole feeling of what humanity is entitled to from the possessors of our common nature. Prosperity or adversity, it is our business to see that these things shall not be, whilst there is any further opening for the spread of trade and commerce by which these persons may earn their bread, instead of receiving it in charity; and instead of dying in destitution, may live on by their own exertions, or by those of their connections who have been enabled to render their kindly assistance.

Towards this we should ever direct our view,—be content with nothing but the entire establishment of the claims of justice and of humanity. And the reason for

not being satisfied with this degree of prosperity is, that the way in which it has been attained shows us the path to get a great deal more. Let Sir Robert Peel take what credit he will for the alterations of the tariff,—if that modicum of Free Trade has done so much, what will not the broad and universal application of the principle effect? He calculates that he has given us of Free Trade enough to enable us to pay the income tax; we want a little more, in order to enable us to rise above the apprehension of change, and see the interests and prosperity of the country moving forward in an accelerated ratio. We are content to bear whatever burdens are needful for the state, willing to be taxed for the Queen and country,—for the administration of law, for army and navy, for the interest of the national debt; but very unwilling to be taxed for the timber-merchants, the sugar-dealers, or the landlords. We hold that to be quite another thing. We do not feel bound to support them, either in grandeur, or in any state short of that of absolute pauperism; and if they claim the privileges of paupers, they must submit to ask for them in paupers' language.

Especially do we demur to our own best feelings, our own noblest exertions, being turned against us for the purposes of class taxation, when the philanthropy of the country, its generous, its noble zeal for negro emancipation, has been made to recoil upon it and serve as a reason for a monopoly in sugar,—as if we were thus to be screwed down because it was found that we felt for the unhappy negro. This is a most mean and ungenerous use of the feeling that was exhibited by the people of this country on that subject. Did they not cheerfully pay their twenty millions, and was not the bargain then complete? Why should we now pay, not for the good of the negro, for that is not in question,—but simply for the interest of the West-India proprietor? The negro does not want our interposition; the complaint of the monopolist papers is, that the negro is too well off. A paper in their interest, the *Morning Herald*, says, that the state of things cannot be good until the wages of labour of the freed negro is reduced,—brought down to what it calls "the wholesome European standard." The same paper says that it advocated free labour, but it never meant free idleness. Now,

if the emancipated black can afford to be idle now that he is free,—if in that genial climate he can realise all that he deems necessary for his subsistence and his comfort, which has been complained of by some of these newspapers,—if he is even in the way to get so much for his labour as to aggrandise himself, and to become a proprietor of the lands he was once flogged to till, why should we not wish him God speed? We have struggled, we have paid for his emancipation; and if emancipation bring him wealth, in the name of Heaven let him possess the enjoyment of that wealth, and all the luxuries it can realise. "No," says the mock philanthropy of the day, "you must enable us to compete with slave labour; you must pay us further." And thus they make your good feeling the instrument of subserving their sordid interests.

The philanthropy of our modern West-India proprietors reminds me of a story of Barrington, the noted pickpocket, some years ago, whose memoirs were at the time as popular as are the stories of Dick Turpin and Jack Sheppard at the present day. He was transported at last; but at Botany Bay he amassed property and became a magistrate,—one of the "great unpaid,"—no doubt he took care to pay himself. Well, Barrington one day went to a watchmaker in London, and gave him instructions to make a very delicate instrument, of a very peculiar construction, which he was to call for. It was made, and made to his satisfaction. He praised it much; he paid the man a 10*l.* note for the job, and was going away, when the maker of the instrument preferred the request that he might know the use for which it was intended. "I shall not tell you its use," said Barrington; "afterwards, perhaps, you may discover." As soon as he was gone, the man found that the instrument had been already used to draw the 10*l.* note out of his pocket. And so you have manufactured a beautiful philanthropy, a genuine one, and the West-India interest, like Barrington, is using your philanthropy to draw money out of the public pocket; and thus you may discover what the objects were with which this philanthropy passed so readily into the ranks of those who had always been the most determined enemies of negro emancipation.

Be not satisfied, I say, with present prosperity, with

all its appearances; for what security for its permanence can we ever have, whilst obstructions to the importation of corn and the exportation of goods remain, not only to limit the operations of commerce, but to spread uncertainty over prices, and every thing connected with such transactions? Why, if one or two bad harvests were to come, where would our prosperity be? The change which came in with low prices would go out with high prices; the same fearful round would have to be trod from which we have but just emerged; there would be the same outcry, the same want and destitution, the same heart-sickening scenes, that but a few years ago produced an impression that can never be obliterated. For there is no security until the simple and direct application of Free-Trade principles shall be made to all the arrangements of this great commercial country. It is as if the powers of disorder were ever beneath our feet. For a short time a stimulus is given, and we rejoice therein. You find in it not a motive for relaxation, but to work on; and while there is no better security than we yet possess, what is the result of prosperity but eventually to enrich those who hold the ultimate screw, and who endeavour to turn every aggrandisement of the country and augmentation of its wealth to their own account?

We should never forget what has been witnessed, and what, when it returns, will return in a yet more awful form; for these crises grow continually darker and deeper as they recur. The powers are undiminished in their force and energy by which the last great seasons of distress were occasioned; they are ready, the moment they are let loose, to work again the like disastrous consequences. It is but as the condition of those who live on the side of Vesuvius or Etna: we may grow careless. The field and the mountain-side may be rich; the vineyards may be laden with grapes; the wealthy may be careless; pretty cottages and stately mansions may rise here and there; the peasantry may be dancing night and day. But the principles that are at work in the bowels of the earth still keep on with their chemical combinations; the great laboratory never ceases; and in the midst of all this peacefulness and rejoicing, another combination of those elements produces explosion, shakes the solid mountain itself; the burning

lava stream rushes down, scattering all before it; the scene changes from one of peacefulness and joy to one of dreary, wide, and lasting desolation. And if a blind persistence in the cause of monopoly should survive the present time of comparative quiet and prosperity—should hold on until failing harvests and famine prices and sinking trade again excite the public mind, and stimulate to madness the feelings of the destitute,—who can say what is too old, too venerable, too sacred, not to be shaken in that convulsion, or give way before that tremendous tempest?

We should not wait till the storm arrives, when it will be impossible to rectify that which, with great care, may be harmoniously arranged during the season of calm and sunshine. Therefore, now, with might and main, urge on your great work; continue with that peaceful and untiring energy that has hitherto been manifested, and make good your steps in the course which leads to assured success. Men of Manchester, with whom it began, I know you cannot and will not relax. You did not when alone, before your spirit had spread itself over the whole face of the country, before you had elicited the response of the metropolis: then you were decided and determined, and you cannot cease to be so now. The resistance of moral nature is at least as great as that of physical nature. There is the security of enlightened determination—a security as great as that of cause and effect in the material creation. The sun and moon once stood still to accommodate an army; Cobden and Bright will not stand still to accommodate a government. Onward, still onward, is their word, whether it be in this mode of action or in that. You will hold your meetings, you will register your voters, you will circulate your tracts, you will send out your lecturers. Whether you petition parliament or abstain from petitioning—whether you cultivate the constituencies of counties or of boroughs—whether you subscribe your money or whether you exhibit manufacturing productions—still your tendency is the same; it is a working right on towards the great and blessed end—a working on with a power like that of the mighty elements of nature—unresting, invisible or visible—welcome or unwelcome to mortals—judged rightly or wrongly—still they form their combinations, still they go on, the sun shining by day, and the

moon and stars by night, maturing the richness of the varied seasons. And like them, your moral energy—a great power of nature also, of our inward and spiritual being—will fulfil its work, which shall combine with all the elemental influences of heaven and earth to declare the glory of God, and to insure the well-being of humanity.

No. XVII.

AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE.

April 9th, 1845.

r that these meetings are about for a time to be sus-
ded, and to give way to other modes of demonstration
he progress of our cause, and as the topics of the day
nected with Free-Trade principles have here and else-
re been continuously and amply discussed, it seems to
not undesirable that the general principles on which
League is founded, the spirit in which its operations
conducted, and the object to which they tend, should
fly pass in review before us; partly to guide those who
a while will lose the opportunity of assembling here,
; they may bear in mind to what to direct their exer-
s, and may keep steadily in view those everlasting truths
ch are the basis of all our expectations, and the direction
ur efforts; and partly to estimate the progress of our
se. Founded in truth as these principles are, we reckon
1 unfailing confidence on their eventual triumph. We
encouraged by many signs to expect a speedy triumph;
however varied the League may appear in its constitu-
elements, however different the classes and parties of
se who assist in its proceedings, still it differs from all
it bodies which have been prominently before the
lic in this,—that we are not a political party; we do
make our principles extempore for the occasion, nor
pt one line of argument to-day and another to-morrow.
are not an "interest," in the common sense of the
n. Agitation is not with us subordinate to sordid pur-
es, and meant in some peculiar and especial way to
wer the objects of a trade in which we are all engaged;
we belong, as you have just been told, to all parties in
tics and in society; the bond of our union being in
ciple, a principle as demonstrable as the strictest
nce; as deep in its basis as is the constitution of
nan nature; as enduring as the history of society,
se progress history records; as pure and sacred as the

dictates of morality; and as certain of success as that truth is omnipotent and must prevail.

The principles of the League are exhibited in a few of the simplest facts in economical science. There is nothing in them of abstruseness, depth, and remoteness, which can long entangle or perplex an earnest mind. They consist almost of axioms: that we should buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest; that the labourer is worthy of his hire, and of that hire not diminished merely for the purpose of enriching his neighbour; that the legitimate object of taxation is the exigency of a state, and not the profit of a class; and that the common interest of nations is in the free interchange of their diversified productions. These are our principles: truths so plain that scarcely any body ventures to deny them in terms, and which all assent to, only making exceptions and equivocations, endeavouring to mystify in this and the other direction, just for the sake of some paltry interest which they have more at heart than the cause of truth and the well-being of humanity. We are not sectarian in political economy. All the teachers of the science, with scarcely any exception—at least, all the more eminent—agree in laying down the maxims which I have just enumerated as the foundation of their speculations. The doctrines we hold are the same in all times and in every country.

A gentleman from the United States, who is present with us this evening, put into my hands the other day a work produced in that country some fifteen years ago or thereabouts, at a time when the American tariff was first making a portion of its community feel an undue pressure; and there the principles that we advocate here are taught with most lucid statement and cogent reasoning; the situation being only just the converse of ours: the agriculturists being there the pleaders for Free Trade, and pushing their arguments—as we do ours against the landlords here—against the manufacturers there, for endearouring to make them pay for cotton goods double the price at which they could get much better by importing instead of manufacturing in their own regions.

The writer, however, was happy in one illustration, which may bear its application in this country. One chapter in his book is a petition from certain fig-growers in the dis-

trict of Columbia. It appears that in the neighbourhood of Washington the climate is such that, "under favourable circumstances," figs will ripen; accordingly a manifesto is drawn up, stating the desirableness of the United States being independent of Turkey for the supply of the population with figs. It was said that this would very much increase the value of land in the United States; that the cultivation of it needed nothing in the world but "protection," —that reasonable protection which government should give to native industry; that the capital thus invested would be laid out most advantageously, as it would employ a great number of native labourers; hothouses, indeed, would be necessary, but then they would employ still more labour; and though the figs would be very dear at first, yet protection might so stimulate the native production, as that eventually America would be the greatest fig-growing and exporting nation in the world. Not only national independence but religion was invoked. It was said that the figs came from Turkey, and every body knows that the cry in Constantinople is, "In the name of the Prophet—figs!" By the proposed plan they would no longer have figs in the name of the Prophet; and, with an excellent class thus nurtured, thriving on the high rents of their fig-grounds, what an independent and proud attitude would the country assume in the eyes of other nations, insomuch that, should a war break out, not a nation on the face of the earth could then dare to say, "Here is a fig for America!"

It is a great mercy that the landowners of our country have no figgeries. The same arguments of independence, the same isolation from other regions, the same pretext of employing native industry, the same disregard of the loss of labour in doing that with much toil and expense which could be produced with less toil and expense elsewhere,— these would all apply in our country as well as in America. They are the arguments used on behalf of the Corn Laws; and the only difference between the supposed case of the figgery and the actual case of the Corn Laws is this, that the one touches only a luxury, and the other goes to diminish the supply of the very first necessary of human existence.

Our principles are not only simple, but they are old,— as old as the science of political economy itself. They were

born with its birth. The common cry that is raised against those who advocate reform and improvements, "Oh, you are introducing new principles, you are broaching unheard-of theories!" cannot be urged against the Anti-Corn-Law League. We trace back those principles through all the writers on the subject, and we find indications of them in the very first teachers of economical science, who were only groping their way. They are part and parcel of it: to deny them is to deny altogether that there is such a science as political economy. Not that I should wonder at hearing such a denial, for a hardihood of assertion has sometimes been shown which would scarcely be surpassed by going that length. I should not be surprised if it were some day even to be asserted, as the old nurse in *Martin Chuzzlewit*—Betsey Prig—says of Mrs. Harris, "Don't believe there ain't no sich a person." Nor would it be astonishing if some Protection-Society manifesto were to declare that "there was no such person never had been as Adam Smith," except, indeed, that this testimony has been given by that society to the existence of such a writer, that they falsified his words and misrepresented his doctrines.

But our principles are not merely as old as political economy; they are, in truth, as old as the history of mankind, the facts of which are the materials of political economy. They are intertwined with the records of the prosperity and the calamity of nations. We can trace them through the long annals of ancient and modern times. We trace them back beyond this, even to the very constitution of nature and the globe itself. They are the dictates of philosophy, interpreted by the system of things in which we live, and of which we form a portion; for when that mighty Power who spread abroad the heavens, fixed suns in their central position, and rolled the planets in their orbits, surrounded them with belts and satellites, measuring the course—limitless as it seems—of the wandering comet, which, in its wild career, moves from the intensity of light to the deepest darkness; bound all together by the principle of gravitation—and thus united our system to other systems through all the infinity of being,—when that Power fashioned this earth of ours, it made a reflex of the combined, harmonised, and mutually dependent system which

is exhibited to the astronomer when he gazes on the heavens; it endowed one climate with one species of fertility, and another with another; and surrounded the earth with those zones—temperate, torrid, and frigid—constituting climates, sunny or moist, in all their diversities, and gave the luscious vine to grow upon the banks of the Rhine and the Rhone, and enriched the Spice Islands with their fragrant products; it spread the broad and vast prairies of America, sufficient to grow corn for the whole world's consumption, planted the tea-groves of China, endowed the sugar-cane with its sweetness, and gave to Britain its coast, minerals, and industry,—and by these, as by the mutual dependence of the heavenly bodies, it said: "All these belong to each other! Let their influence be reciprocal: let one minister to another; be the interest of each the interest of all, and let all minister to each." They are one in wisdom and beneficence, and show forth as resplendently as the starry heavens the glory of a benevolent Providence.

Our principles are not only the dictates of nature, but they are the morality of nations; they are doctrines of peace and harmony to those whom thoughtless presumption, designing ambition, or mad passion, would stir up to offensive deeds, and to the slaughter and devastation, the aggregate of crime and misery, which is too often called "glorious and honourable war." I trust that, combining with other influences, the principles of Free Trade will become in our land as a barrier against warlike feelings through the great mass of the population; so that they will give no encouragement and no heed to those who would turn aside the course of improvement, and stop all useful progress; who would suspend the best efforts of mind, heart, and industry, for the indulgence of any proud selfishness or passion that may point in the direction of hostilities towards any country that respects our shores, and will interchange with us the commodities we produce.

It is sad to see how lightly speakers and writers will put forth whatever degree of power they may possess in such a direction as that of warlike operations. I cannot but confess to have been somewhat shocked this morning at reading an article in a paper which, by the expression I am about to quote, shows how easily the advocate of starvation may

pass to the morality of massacre. I read this morning in a paper an intimation to America, that "New York and some other towns might conveniently be bombarded." Why, we were angry enough when the hot-headed young Prince de Joinville thought that Brighton might be conveniently bombarded, and yet we are holding out a threat of this sort. Upon what account, or upon what ground? Because Messrs. Peel and Polk have talked like two blustering boys about the Oregon territory. Why, what is this territory they are disputing about? There are some 350,000 square miles of it, of which it seems we are claiming a barren 100,000, or thereabouts. What are they worth? What is the value of all the land that exists without man upon it, with his industry and products? Much of this Oregon territory is a desert; the great Sahara of America, the Botany Bay of the red man's banishment. There are now upon it some few hundreds of Indians and half-castes, connected with the Hudson's-Bay Company; there are certain trappers, hunters, and squatters from the United States. Then there are some Indian tribes there, who rejoice in such names as "Flathead," "Slitnose," "Pointed-heart." The buffaloes are the lords of the soil, unless when the game-laws of these Indians interfere. A great portion of it is mere lava, the overflowing of volcanoes; a "city" is talked of, but scarcely any settlement makes it, as territory, of any value. Quarrel about this! Why, we might just as well be invited by Peel and Polk to fight about mountains in the moon.

But let men have something to do with it; let those who have found no preferable home go there, and see what effect they can produce upon the best portions of the soil; as their numbers increase and their exertions tell, it will soon become more valuable. And when man has occupied it; when industry has driven its car of peaceful conquest around the borders of that vast land; when towns have arisen and cities appeared, with their thronging numbers; when the Rocky Mountains are tunnelled, and rail and canal have united the Atlantic and Pacific; when the waters of the Columbia swarm with steamboats,—why, then will be the time to talk of the Oregon territory. Then, without a regiment or line-of-battle ship, without bombarding any town whatever, Free Trade will conquer

the Oregon territory for us, and will conquer the United States for us also,—as far as it is desirable either for us or for them that there should be any conquest whatever in the case,—Free Trade will establish there all the insignia of conquest. When their products come here, and those of our industry return, there will be scarcely a labourer upon the pine-forest that he is clearing but will wear upon his back, to his very shirt, the livery of Manchester. The knife with which he carves his game will have the mark of Sheffield upon its blade, as a testimony of our supremacy. Every handkerchief waved upon the banks of the Missouri will be the waving of an English banner from Spitalfields. Throughout the country there will be marks of our skill and greatness, and tribute paid for us received not by warriors or governors, not coming directly into the national treasury, but flowing into the pockets of the industrious and toiling poor, refreshing trade, and enriching those who pursue it, giving them an imperial heritage beyond the wide Atlantic. Why, they will be conquered, for they will work for us; and what can the conquered do more for their masters? They will grow corn for us, they will grind it, and send us the flour; they will fatten pigs for us upon the peaches of their large wooded grounds; they will send us whatever they can produce that we want, and without asking us to put our hand in our pocket in order, by taxation, to pay a governor there for quarrelling with their representatives, or soldiery to bayonet their multitudes. There is nothing upon earth worthier the name of empire than this; this is a nobler kind of dominion, less degrading both for the one party and for the other, less debasing, than any sovereignty that was ever won by armies, and, being so won, reluctantly swayed by sceptres.

But it is not only from nation to nation that the uniting influence of our principles extends, but from class to class, where the alienation is, perhaps, sometimes greater than amongst those who dwell in the most remote localities. We have very much indeed to achieve in the application of those principles in our own country, as well as with reference to other nations. The severe period of three years ago has passed away, but not that we should sleep in fancied security. Let this babble of fleets and armies, and these threats of war, increasing, as they will, feelings of

animosity and enmity, if they lead to no direct results of hostilities, produce their natural result of deranging the operations of trade, or let two or three bad harvests in succession send up the price of corn to such a price as it then attained, and where are we, with the prosperity that has been so much boasted of? It is for us to look in time to the prevention; for means by which a recurrence of the tremendous calamities of that period shall be averted. And in our prosperity I confess I see reason, abundant reason, on every hand, for putting forth exertions to mitigate the amount of wretchedness with which that prosperity is clouded and tainted. For in this metropolis what is the condition, I will not say of hundreds, but of thousands and thousands? What is the state of the habitations of the poor, made so wretched by their wretchedness; for nobody lives in a hovel that can hire a decent house?

I met a short time since with a report of one of our religious societies—"the London City Mission." The Spitalfields' auxiliary of that mission reported thus, at the commencement of the present year: they begin with stating the illness of one of their missionaries; and then they go on to say that "a second missionary was very shortly after seized with an equally violent attack of fever, and has been entirely disabled for work for nearly four months, and in great hazard of his life. He is now, by God's blessing, beginning to regain his strength, but he will not again be able to resume work upon the same district, and it will be necessary for him also to be removed. Neither of these cases of fever occurred from the visitation of any peculiarly affected room, but simply from the constant exposure to the malaria of so densely populated and undrained a district. A third missionary has been in so bad a state of health as to allow him to work for many months but for a very limited period of time; a fourth missionary has had to resign through the failure of his health; a fifth, to be removed; a sixth is still very weak; and a seventh missionary, in the parish of Spitalfields, has been entirely laid by for the last eight weeks. These illnesses have occurred in spite of every precaution; no missionaries being received into the mission but such as are in the prime of life, and who can satisfactorily show that they are in a good state of health."

Thus there is a plague that requires to be stayed. I know there are propositions for sanitary legislation; but what can all the sanitary legislation in the world do, if you do not mitigate the poverty that locates people in these wretched, unwholesome situations? You are only touching the outward symptoms of the disease. With your improvements it has continually happened that you drive them yet further and yet closer together. You coop them up into yet more pestilential crowds and corners. It is by an amendment of their condition,—by giving them better wages, that they may pay for better houses,—and in that alone, that you can stay such an exhibition as this, and clear the way for those operations of religion which are now rendered fatal to the missionaries themselves by the intervention of monopoly. The missionary who makes this report gives the following statement: "The extreme poverty and the frequent destitution of the Spitalfields' population, present further difficulties in their instruction. When the cravings of hunger are inflicting pain on the bodies of the people, they are naturally indifferent to other matters; and very many are the families who are thus circumstanced, and who, when the missionary speaks to them of religion while they are wanting bread, consider that he is mocking them. One missionary found, during the severe weather of last winter, a poor woman very ill, lying upon a few cane shavings, without a particle of fire, with scarcely an article of clothing to cover her person, literally perishing for want. He dared not to direct her to the Saviour as the bread of life until he had first saved her from starving by furnishing her with the bread that perisheth."

The case of this woman is, in a curious way, most unconsciously on the part of the writer of the report, connected with the assertions that have been repeatedly put forth by the advocates of the League. How came the poor creature in such a condition as that the very proposal to speak of religious matters, under the common simile of food, was in danger of being thought a mockery? The *Inquirer* thus tells us: "This widow is aged thirty-six, by trade a chair-bottomer and lucifer-box maker; she has one child aged thirteen, and one married daughter." Now, mark here. "Her husband died about twelve years since,

leaving her with three small children, one of whom shortly after died. For the first six years she comfortably supported herself and family by slop-making, but at the end of that time wages were much reduced, and she was eventually thrown out of work: a distress for rent followed, and for five weeks herself and children had to sleep in a cupboard. . . . . I perceived that she was starving, and would soon be in eternity if something was not immediately done for her. . . . In the afternoon the parish doctor was obtained, and he testified that she was dying for want of nourishment—a circumstance not to be wondered at, as it is a fact that for six weeks previously the most she had been able to earn during any one week was 3*s.* 6*d.*, sometimes it was only 2*s.* 6*d.*, out of which she had to pay 2*s.* per week for rent."

Now, I request your attention to the date. This poor woman, with her family, lost her husband twelve years ago; that is, twelve years from the winter of 1844, when the missionary visited her, and then for six years she had work and wages, and supported her family. What were those six years? Why, the twelve years just bring us back to 1832. The price per quarter of wheat in that year was 58*s.* 8*d.*; and for the five years following it was—in 1833, 52*s.* 11*d.*; in 1834, 46*s.* 2*d.*; in 1835, 39*s.* 4*d.*; in 1836, 48*s.* 6*d.*; and in 1837, 55*s.* 10*d.* Those were the first six years; and then that poor woman maintained her family single-handed. "But," says the missionary, "at the end of that time wages were much reduced, and then followed the distress for rent, and the seizure of their bed, and the starvation that followed." Now, I have given the prices of wheat up to 1837. In 1838, the date of the commencement of these disasters, wheat rose to 64*s.* 7*d.*; in 1839, 70*s.* 8*d.*; in 1840, 66*s.* 4*d.*; and in 1841, 64*s.* 4*d.* There is the history and mystery of the poor woman's ability in the one case, and inability in the other; of the comfort of the first six years, and the misery of the six that followed. Now, is it for men like Sir Robert Inglis, who supports this and similar societies, to talk of "the cold-hearted and muddle-headed economists,"—who would go to the root of this mischief, and enable such people as that poor woman to support herself,—who have taught repeatedly in this place how cheap years are years of prosperity for the labouring poor,

and dear years of calamity for them. "Cold-hearted and muddle-headed," because they do not look at the outward symptoms merely, or rest in a superficial view, just removing the pressure for a moment; but, instead of groping in the dark, penetrate to the core of the thing, lay the axe to the root, and would strike down a system that bears such pestilential fruit for the population of this metropolis and the country at large.

I cannot dismiss this report without reverting to another case in it for a very different reason. One of the missionaries relates the case of a Christian woman, who had been out of work some time. His superintendent noticed the case, and requested him to take her an order for 1*s.* a week for six weeks. On informing her of this, and offering her the order, she expressed her thankfulness for the kindness, but added: "I cannot think of accepting it, as there are so many who have families to support, and who are as poor as I am. Let it be given to one of them. I have 1*s.* 6*d.* a week to subsist upon, and the promise of a faithful God to trust to. I have always been able to earn my daily bread, and while I can do that my conscience will not allow me to take what so many need." Noble creature! I wish our noble*men*, as they are called by a stretch of courtesy, would imitate her magnanimity. They, with all their broad lands and their well-filled coffers, with their thousands per week, or per day, perhaps; they, with the sources of wealth and emolument ever flowing for them in a golden stream,—do not disdain to take the shilling that she refused: they take it out of the poor slop-maker's pocket who is earning her 3*s.* a week—they extract it from her by their Corn Laws.

While there are such things as these in the country, it is for the League to be up and doing, to keep ever before the public mind the principles by which alone such a plague can be stayed. It is for them also to teach the unscrupulous classes their duty. I said they did not disdain to take the shilling, for they were out of sympathy with this poor but honourable-minded woman. I fear they were not in sympathy, either, when she said she would "try to earn her own living, and trust in Providence." That is not the course their confidence takes. They are like the old Scotchwoman, who, when the waters at Queen's

Ferry seemed rather rough, and the boatman told her she must trust in Providence, said, "Na, na; I will not trust in Providence as long as there is a brig at Stirling." They will not trust in Providence as long as there is an Act of Parliament to be had. No, that is their vain reliance; not so sure a footing as the brig of Stirling; and, much as they may rely on what they at present enjoy in this way, it will go very hard but Sir Robert Peel's Corn Bill will be very little better than the brig to carry them over to the shores of Free Trade. Such cases as these show the propriety of the appeals made by the League to the women of Great Britain. We have been told that the League should not drag our countrywomen through the dirty ways of party politics. I should like to know who made the ways of politics dirty. The League never did that. It never perverted legislative power to sordid purposes to advance their own money interests. It is that which has made party politics dirty. There is a redeeming power from the dirt of party politics in the exertions which the League is putting forth, that needs not be afraid or ashamed to call for woman's sympathy and woman's help, assured that she would honour herself much more by contributing towards the destruction of the cause of misery, than by merely aiding the little charities which here and there pull a leaf or a twig from the poison-tree, but leave it still to send forth its baleful odours, and scatter death and desolation over the soil.

The spirit indeed of the League has been found fault with. It is difficult to please some people any how. One accusation especially has been made, in which I have sometimes had the honour of being personally mentioned. In fact, there is one journal which has stereotyped its report of what I say here, and always sums it up in one sentence, announcing that I "uttered my usual tirade against the aristocracy of the country." I wish to say a word or two upon that matter. I do not profess to be a very enthusiastic admirer of the aristocracy. For the legally constituted aristocracy of my country I have all that love and reverence which the laws of my country require and enforce—and it can be no man's duty to have more; but I have never come here to express my opinion of the aristocracy, or the suffrage, or any other great questions which

are put under temporary abeyance by the Anti-Corn-Law agitation—an abeyance from which, I trust, they will some day arise, for which day I am looking with an expectation which is not the less valuable to me, for seeing clearly that this question must be disposed of first, and the sooner it is disposed of the better. But all that I have ever said here about the aristocracy has been said of certain members of that body, not in their capacity of aristocrats, but in their occupation as tradesmen. In that character they are, I apprehend, most legitimate objects of animadversion here. A man is not to be protected if he keeps a chandler's shop and cheats, because he happens to be one of the members of the aristocracy. This is what I complain of. They keep a great chandler's shop, and they look to every minute article in their store, to see how they can pervert the power of legislation to make the community pay more for it than its natural price.

There was a time when trading at all was thought inconsistent with the possession of that dignity. Your feudal baron did not mind robbing by the strong hand, but he turned away with contempt from robbing by the short weight of a protective duty. So far back as the days of Elizabeth, the intellect of the country had begun to mark out for division the trading propensities of the members of the feudal aristocracy. In Beaumont and Fletcher's *Beggar's Bush*, there is a dispute between a certain military gentleman, proud of his aristocratical position, and a couple of merchants. He tells them that "this is certain, if you once buy and sell, your gentry's gone." To which the merchant retorts:

> "Do not you, the lords
> Of land (if you be any), sell the grass,
> The corn, the straw, the milk, the cheese—"

Then the other merchant interposes—

> "REMEMBER BUTTER! do not LEAVE OUT butter!"

And they never have left out butter to this very day. Only they have improved upon the practice of those days by spoiling butter which is not the produce of their own land with the filthiness of tar.

Now, when nobles become tradesmen, when dukes become dealers in various commodities, when the memory of

the Plantagenet serves to make a better barter at Mark Lane,—why, I think it is time for us to call out and say that this is unfair dealing with the other tradespeople of the country. I confess I never picture to myself—it has got such hold of one's fancy—the Duke of Richmond, but with his coronet on his head, with a corn sample in his pocket, a salmon in one hand, and a whisky-bottle in the other, and enthroned upon a butter-firkin. Then I study this figure as I would Quarles's *Emblems;* for the coronet is practically connected with all the rest by the legislative power that enacts protective duties. The coronet rubs the sample till the grains are more golden; the coronet is thrown into the scale with the salmon, and makes the fish-eater pay a higher price for it; the coronet is a false bottom to the whisky-bottle, and cheats the purchaser of his Glenlivat; and, last of all, if the butter be not his own, the coronet makes a hole in the firkin, in order to pour in the pitch and tar. Why, this incongruity, this perversion of all dignity of station, and whatever is most honourable and majestic in legislative power,—this cannot save a set of tradesmen! We cannot forget the one character in the other; they blend all together, and we look at the whole as peers of parliament and compeers of pedlars,—conservators of the constitution and of canary-seed,—lords of land and of lard,—knights of the garter and the grease-pot.

Well it is that there are men of a different sort of temperament in that body; and that there are those who, slightly altering the burden of Robert Burns's famous song, can say of themselves, at least, and a few noble coadjutors,

"A lord's a man for a' that;"

who feel that society has done much for them, and are desirous in turn of doing something for society; who have their sense of the responsibility of station combined with their sense of the responsibility of legislation; who are not ennobled by their title, but their title is ennobled by their minds and hearts; who move surrounded by blessings, which redeem the name of the class with which they are associated, and to whom the rest must owe it that the very name of hereditary nobility does not become a foul stench in the nostrils of humanity.

I must return to the point from which I started,—the cessation, for a time, of these meetings. They will be suspended, but the exertions of some whom you are so often delighted to see here will not be suspended, but from night to night, as opportunity shall serve, will they endeavour to impress upon the members of the legislature the principles which they declare in these meetings. Their words will go forth, by means of the press, through the length and breadth of the land; they will be teaching the millions of this country, and the millions of other countries too; their lessons will be read through the continent of Europe, and across the wide Atlantic. They will at last, I trust, by their simplicity, earnestness, truthfulness, and information, —by their determined pursuit in that body of their one great object,—shame down the spirit of party, and deprive monopoly of all grace and ornament in its proceedings,—until at last, in deference to public opinion, it must fairly throw up its ill-gotten gains and badly advised measures.

These meetings will be suspended, but the exertions of the same individuals, and others in coöperation with them, will not be suspended. As the season advances they will be at their work, passing with the rapidity of steam from one part of the country to another. They will be able to take advantage of that growing spirit of dissatisfaction, restlessness, and inquiry—and we trust the openness to conviction—which is spreading throughout the body of tenant-farmers. They will argue with those who will hear reason; they will warn those who may appear infatuated; they will show that they have only the good of all classes at heart; and in all classes, and especially that most important class, will continue their labours,—and may success attend them!

These meetings will be suspended, but the place will not be vacated; it will be rich with the display of British industry, enterprise, taste, and genius, inviting contemplation, as a specimen of what our people can do; demanding attention from those who may admire the products to the industry of those by whom they are realised; and pleading with a mute but eloquent argument for the restoration to industry of its rights, that those who are capable of so much ingenuity and exertion may not pass without their

recompense,—a recompense they are able, if let alone, to earn for themselves from their countrymen and other nations.

These meetings will be suspended, but the course of events will proceed,—the alternations of cheapness and dearness, of prosperity and calamity; the course of events which, in so many ways, already has placed the principles of Free Trade in different lights, and thrown upon them the most dissimilar tints of colouring, only to show through all their eternal identity. The great powers of nature will continue their operations; the showers will descend, the sun will shine, and knowledge, truth, and science—which belong to the great powers of nature—these will continue their work; diffusing themselves like the light and air of heaven, penetrating to the domestic hearth, taking their places in multitudinous assemblages; and every where breathing the animated soul of that Free-Trade principle which alone can constitute the renovated life and regained prosperity of our country.

These meetings will be suspended, but the mysteries of life and death will hold on their course. Every day its appointed thousands will be born; thousands of mouths more to be fed by a soil that is now insufficient to yield bread for those already in existence,—every increase of the population being an augmented demonstration of the necessity of that great change for which the League is pleading. And death will continue as well as life; monopoly will have its victims; Free Trade sometimes loses its champions, and others will follow that excellent person whose loss, a short time since, made Manchester one great place of mourning.* Before we shall again assemble here, voices that have now joined in cheering shouts may be mute for ever; but if it be so—as

* Sir Thomas Potter died on the 20th March 1845. The *League* newspaper of the 22d of the same month said: "For more than thirty years the name of this estimable gentleman was associated, in Manchester, with every object of local or national advantage. . . . . Through evil report and through good report he maintained the great principles of civil and religious liberty and of commercial freedom; exhibiting the same firmness in the dark days of Sidmouth and Castlereagh that he displayed in the later season of comparative liberality. . . . . A new generation in Manchester enjoys the fruit of his toils, for to him the town is indebted for the best part of its municipal institutions."

it is wise and right that it should be—to leave the world better than we found it, by the advancement of this great cause, will be no unworthy consolation on a bed of sickness or in the agonies of death. And when the liberated principle of vitality rejoins the great majority, should it meet there with those spirits of the just who in their day have laboured and suffered for human good; who have wrought out, in defiance of calumny and persecution, some splendid work of philanthropy and improvement; let them be told—to gladden them even there—that the seed they have sown in tears is springing up, bringing another harvest; that their patriotism and philanthropy yet walk the world in might and majesty; that another battle is being fought here—and well fought—for truth and peace, right and justice; and that another victory, one of the most splendid of all, is about to be won over the powers of darkness, by destroying the worst obstacles they have raised to man's enjoyment of the integrity and nobility of character, the happiness and the hopefulness, for which he was fitted at his birth by the great Creator.

No. XVIII.

AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE.

June 18th, 1845.

THE anticipations with which the last speaker* so eloquently concluded his address are, I apprehend, thoroughly well founded; and very unreasonable must that free-trader be who does not look with satisfaction on the progress and the prospects of this agitation. By the signs which offer themselves on every hand it is plain that the end is coming,—that this conflict cannot be continued much longer,—that diminishing majorities, from the sense of those who have become, we trust, ashamed to show themselves in a majority for scarcity in the House of Commons, will ere long exhibit the transformation of a majority into a minority; and that we shall find at last, not by the triumph of a party, not by the exercise of an overawing influence, but by the triumph of truth and reason, that the measure which we have so long and urgently asked for will be generally and completely conceded to us. One leader of a great political party has voted with us; the leader of the other great political party has, through nine-tenths of his speech, spoken for us. There is an approximation of persons of different classes of opinions, showing the same advance of the tide towards the great object. One agricultural society has been broken up because—as the farmers said—the landlords did not take any care about it; and, if they took no care, I wonder who should!

The forces of our enemy being thus diminishing, their spirits seem to be quailing also. Their arguments, such as they were, are fast vanishing altogether from human contemplation. Indeed, two of our newspapers have been discussing whether the present Corn Law has one argument left, and if so, what is that one argument; and I do not think they have very clearly discovered it. Even that old excuse—which has been so humorously exposed by Mr.

* Mr. Cobden.

Cobden—of the peculiar burdens of the aristocracy, even that is kept out of sight, as if there was something of which the revelation would make them ashamed rather than proud. It is still paraded in a sort of vacant show, as in the celebration of the Eleusinian Mysteries at Athens, there used to be a donkey led through the streets, with a pannier on its back, covered up very carefully with a white linen veil, where nobody was to presume to peep, but in which all were to suppose there was something very wonderful and sacred, until it became a proverb in Athens, "The ass carries the mysteries."

I am afraid the old company of repeaters, from day to day, of these mysterious excuses of peculiar agricultural burdens, may find themselves in a somewhat similar position. They will be merely the ass carrying the mysteries; and when they make their parade with this, and hold it up before the people's eyes as something wonderful, why, it will soon come out, as once happened in a corporation debate, when an alderman was called to order for shaking his head while a brother alderman was speaking,—he said it was true he did shake his head, but there was nothing in that. They are vanishing as fast as shadows when the sun rises. Sophisms, that once were so plentifully poured through the country, and were paraded as so many irrefragable arguments, are fast vanishing; and the votes vanish after the sophisms, until at last the ground will be cleared for truth and justice to come forward on the scene. Yes, it comes; the condemnation of the most atrocious injustice that was ever perpetrated on labour in any age or country whatever. It comes—the blotting out of that old folly from our statute-book, where it has remained so long, not mixed with baser matter, for baser matter never was inscribed on any book of law, or any volume whatever. It comes—not an indemnity for the past, for monopoly will not be asked to disgorge its gains, but a security for the future; to every one that which he earns, and to the country a fair field for a long and glorious career of national prosperity.

And if we free-traders have reason to be satisfied with the prospects which are opening on us, that complacency is rendered more complete by the circumstances in connection with which these prospects arise on our view. We have reason, I think, to be most sincerely and devoutly glad

that this prospect of success is not accompanied with the fearful symptoms, some of which have been touched upon this evening, of a few years ago, that it does not come whilst numbers are pining and perishing with want, crime multiplying with fearful strides, and death adding,—as was the case after the highest years of the prices of corn, in 1839 and 1840, when it reached 70*s.*,—his 20,000 in one year to that fearful list; not when symptoms of demoralisation connected with the pressure of want and with the inability to provide for offspring are spreading themselves over the land, and threatening to change it into one bed of corruption; but that in a time of comparative prosperity, —when wages in different parts of the country are rising, when men are looking about with leisure for thought, and gaining the wisdom which belongs to the agency of thought, —that in a season of peace and comparative sunshine, we shall have our views gladdened with the addition to these blessings, and have that greatest blessing of all that shall permanently insure the free importation of food in exchange for the products of our industry.

Better and wiser it is for all parties that, in such a period as this, the change should be accomplished; and I trust that the individuals who hold the reins of government may feel this and lay it to heart. Sir Robert Peel has keen eyes for seeing a little cloud, although it were across the Atlantic; but he never saw a darkness so thick and deep— he never witnessed a tornado so terrific—as that which would sweep through the length and breadth of this land if two or three bad harvests were to come in succession, and the wants and the exigencies of the population should drive them to desperate courses, until they burst out with the fury of a volcano, leaving what once was order, beauty, and harmony only one dreary scene of terrific barrenness and desolation.

Oh, happy for us that it should come now!—now, when long training has taught the people of this country to think steadily on subjects once remote from their observation; when their judgments have been exercised with arguments which multitudes have seldom been accustomed to weigh, and which can be presented with confidence to great assemblies, and there duly appreciated; when their better condition has led mechanics, instead of nightly drilling on

hills, to look to athenæums, parks, and trim gardens, in which they may enjoy their leisure. And with the growth of judgment, the idea of violence has been expelled from all minds, and there is reliance on goodness, and confidence in the omnipotence of truth, and a growing sense of right and justice. The national mind would go along with the great legislative act of rectitude; would give it a power that it could not possess under any other circumstances; would neither receive it for triumph nor scorn it as an imposition; but would realise its principles and its power until it became a moral influence in their souls, and its beneficent tendency would be incorporated in their thoughts and characters; and they would go to their labours and engagements, and would look at their fellow-countrymen and foreigners in the spirit of that science which teaches us that all interests are identified, and all classes in the community have one great or common concern; that all nations are made of one flesh and blood; and that in their brotherhood the principles of Free Trade, by which they communicate to each other such surplus of their own particular advantages, are the law of nature and morality and of God, under which they live, and by which they arrive at a higher degree of human blessedness.

It was in the spirit of the soundest political wisdom that Mr. Cobden, long ago, at one of the very first meetings held here, stated that he did not expect to carry Free Trade as the triumph of a party, but by the conviction of enlightened men of all parties. Union is the spirit of Free Trade; not the force of antagonism and rivalry; not the horrible monster that some conjure up to their minds under the term "competition;" but union by each working for others, as others are doing good for them. And this spirit of union has grown with the growth of the League, and strengthened with its strength. What we wish for in the world, we exhibit in ourselves; what we ask our own legislature and that of other countries to do, we display in its limited effects in our own meetings and proceedings; nor, perhaps, has there ever been in any country or in any age such a social combination as these walls witnessed not long ago by those who came to the Bazaar; who made the Bazaar; who, in all their diversities, were of one heart and soul in forwarding the objects of the Bazaar, and of Free

Trade in general. What religious sect was not represented there? What station in society had not noble and pure specimens of it there? What class or occupation did not show itself on that occasion, of either sex and all ages? They were there,—there for the same purpose; there in a way so true and beautiful that one might well bless Providence that any circumstance or movement whatever had arisen to give to the world such a sight as that. Those who had only met in the fierceness of political or theological debate; those who were separated by the broad gulfs that intervene between the different ranks of society; those whose customary life is seclusion, but who felt not ashamed or afraid to enter into the crowd, and were safe in that throng as in the bosom of their own families,—why, all were there—there, exhibiting not the license of heathen saturnalia, but the beauty of Christian union. They were there, even children disporting themselves, as it were, in an excitement which they could but partly understand, yet which had begun to dawn upon their minds to help on the great result; as the poet records of the battle in which the Swiss cantons struggled to the last for their independence of France, as he tells us that—

> "Fierce amid the hostile bands,
> Shouting in the foremost fray,
> Children raised their little hands
> In their country's evil day,"—

so here were children, not to imbrue their infantile hands in blood, but to learn the arts of peace, the love of peace, and the delights and blessings of peace. Here they were earning for themselves a gladsome time even for remote years; for when in their age their children shall go to school and be taught history—when they shall read those dark pages that record the crimes inflicted on this country by our scarcity laws, and turn over the brighter pages of those paragraphs that tell of their demolition—then the little things will raise their hands to heaven, and bless God that their father or mother was in that struggle, and were free-traders too.

Not that I think any brightness in our prospects, or any apparent near approach to the great consummation, should induce us for one instant to relax our perseverance, our unabating energy in subscription, canvass, registration, and

exertion of any sort that may be needful. Our unabating zeal and energy is an essential condition to the realisation of those prospects; and I think we have confident reason to expect that Sir Robert Peel will not scruple to put an end to these atrocious laws. I think that we may confidently expect that in no long period of time a Tory majority of the legislature will not be found to obstruct their abolition. But remember this,—that there is wheel connected with wheel, and the movement must go through the whole series. To make the majority of the legislature go on, we must make Sir Robert Peel go on; and to make Sir Robert Peel go on, we must make Lord John Russell go on; to make Lord John Russell go on, we must make the Whig members of parliament go on; to make them, or any member of parliament, go on, we must make the constituency go on; and to do that, we must make the huge atmosphere—the great multitude of the population by which they are surrounded—go on; and to make that go on, why, the League itself, the mainspring of all, must go on, and continue its appliances with unabating power and influence. It is with the League and Sir Robert Peel as with the wind and the windmill. You know the chorus with which the play of *The Miller and his Men* opens:

> "When the wind blows,
> Then the mill goes;"

and so on. So it is here:

> "When the *League* blows,
> Then the *Peel* goes;
> When the *League* drops,
> Then the *Peel* stops!"

That is not the way to get the *re-Peel* that we want; nor will the needful effort of indomitable perseverance and excessive energy, which has never hitherto failed, be lacking now, when the ground is so much more clear, and the prospects so much more stimulating. For what is the condition of monopoly? There is a scene in Serjeant Talfourd's play of *The Athenian Captive*, in which the vanquished hero, made a slave, has first to take off his helmet, and so to deposit his buckler, then to give up his sword, and then to sink into his servile condition. Now, in this way Sir Robert Peel is serving the Corn Law. He takes national independence—"that is your buckler—put

that down;" "class interest—that is the plume in your helmet—lower that;" "the effect on wages, and the agricultural classes—that is your sword—give that up." He strips off one thing after another, but with this difference, —the Athenian captive was stripped of his appendages that he might be made a slave; Sir Robert Peel strips monopoly of all its powers and appendages, in order that the country may rise to the condition of commercial freedom. He leaves but one plea for the laws which he so stoutly defended—one, and only one; and that is, as he replied after the hon. member for Wolverhampton, that "protection law is 150 years old."

So old a law might have been a little wiser. Well, this hoary-headed sinner has been made by Sir Robert Peel to confess to all sorts of iniquities,—to have been an inveterate sophist; to have played off all sorts of humbug upon the nation in order to gratify his private interest; to have been the occasion of distress and suffering. And if we look from his admission to the facts, we may accumulate on its head yet more and heavier crimes: it has stimulated guilt; it has plundered the honest, the poor, and the industrious; it has entrapped children and bred them up to theft and fraud, and made them its victims, and has even been accessory to murder, and sent one after another to the grave; in fact, it has done as much iniquity on a broad scale as Fagan the Jew is described by Mr. Dickens, in *Oliver Twist,* to have committed on a small scale. Now, the very same defence is set up for it. "The law has lived 150 years," says Sir Robert Peel. What said Fagan in court? "I am an old man!" The appeal did not avail him in his guilt. The scene is told by Dickens in one of those expressive passages which go to every imagination and heart, realising to us at once the cunning of the man as well as his criminality, and the feeling also of others, in a way which may well rank amongst the masterpieces of that fictitious writing—the only great fiction —which is founded upon truth, the truth of human nature, and which he has thus described in the work to which I refer: "'Guilty!' says the jury; and the building rang with a tremendous shout, and another, and another, and then it echoed deep and loud groans, that gathered strength as they swelled out like angry thunder. It was a peal of

joy from the populace outside, greeting the news that he should die on Monday. The noise subsided, and he was asked if he had any thing to say why sentence of death should not be passed on him. He resumed his listening attitude, and looked intently at the questioner while the demand was made; but it was twice repeated before he seemed to hear it, and then he only muttered that he was 'an old man, an old man,—a very old man;' and so dropping into a whisper, he was silent again." Age did not save him, nor shall it save the Corn Laws; his day of doom arrived, and so shall theirs; and louder shouts than Dickens has described shall ring the peal of its condemnation, and hail, with iterated joyousness, the fact, that at last there shall come its black Monday for the old black monopoly.

This is not the place in which political matters or political characters not necessarily involved in our own peculiar topics are to be discussed. I, therefore, go not into my opinion of the career of Sir Robert Peel, or of the many reasons that would present themselves to my mind why I might prefer that the country received this great retribution from other hands than his. But there are some reasons why it would be better that he—why it would be better that he than any other man whatsoever—should at last grant this great measure and become its author, and that, after having in various ways gradually led forward the adoption of Free-Trade principles in the various bearings of our commercial legislation, he should at length crown the whole with this; and the commercial blood in his veins run the more rapidly as he lives to see how much good could be accomplished in the nation, and what a bright scene of peace, joy, and prosperity would follow, from the complete carrying out of this principle; and in that learn a moral lesson to be taught him in no other way. For all my animosity towards Sir Robert Peel would be gratified, and the worst vengeance I may wish inflicted on him would be this,—that in the contemplation of the blessings of Free Trade to the country, by him conferred, he might read how much better is one single simple act of right, than a whole life of parliamentary tactics and political expediency.

As the great event we anticipate is coming, so it will

have passed by; and looked back upon, and through the following years of time, this agitation will be revolved in people's minds, and it will be desirable that they should not forget it, and that no lapse of time whatever should obliterate the period from their memories. I trust that means will be taken in furtherance of this purpose; and that when her Majesty shall have reigned some half-century, if in her age she should call to mind the splendid amusements of her youth, and fancy to give them a parting glance before she left the world, it may make them the means of imprinting a wholesome lesson on the mind of the Prince of Wales; and perhaps then the recollection of her old sports may lead her to give another *bal costumé*, of which the adornments will be the costume of the Corn-Law period, and the peculiar effect which Protection had on the dress and manners of the population. Should she do so, there will be a curious assemblage: very unlike either the grotesque drapery of George II. or the heroic costume of the Elizabethan era. There may be jewels and splendour there; but they will have to be ticketed—those bright diamonds—as the result of the tears and groans shed by the labouring population. Members of both Houses of the Legislature may come to that ball, and they will carry a map of the world in their hands, on which they will intently look, to show how their ancestors peered on it in order to discover any corner, however remote, of the globe, from which a single handful of agricultural produce might be imported into this country in competition with the growth of their own estates. Overseers will be there, with the garb and look in which they told the labourer not to come for relief if he had the opportunity of earning any thing like as much as 6*s*. a week. In one corner of the splendid room may be seen "a woman in most unwomanly rags," singing "The Song of the Shirt." And in the opposite corner, perhaps, a noble with a petition for the continuance of protection in one hand, and in the other a proposition for subscriptions to relieve these poor seamstresses, and plans of charity-balls: he sustaining the character of a charity-monger; for, in our nobility, there are charity-mongers as well as cheesemongers and fishmongers. Throughout the whole there would be large groups of ragged peasants, some of them dressed up like the double figures one occasionally sees in burlesque bal-

lets; a peasant with a showy hat and green ribbons on it in front, and a great hole in that same hat behind; a clean smock-frock for covering a coat out at the elbows, and dropping from his limbs in rags. There would be whole tribes of lean beings, in workhouse jackets and felons' jackets; and interspersed amongst them, individuals as poachers with their screw-guns, and incendiaries with their turpentine-balls and lucifer-matches. It would be a sort of Dance of Death, which, in the recollection that this was all a thing of times gone by, might beat merrily on the marble floor, the tombstone of defunct Monopoly, and tell that death had long since gathered his "harvest home" from artificial famine, and had only scanty gleanings left; while over him they would dance to those Free-Trade quadrilles, whose merry sound anticipates the period when that gladness shall have its exuberant outpouring.

And not then—oh, no, never! not while the world stands—shall the cruelty of the Corn-Law system be obliterated from the memory. Some—were such a scene as I have imagined ever to take place—might be present at it who would not have been living but for the repeal of the laws whose deadly operation might also have sent them where it has sent so many others: for it is the peculiar cruelty of this system that it wars on the young; it obstructs the young man's prospects in life; it makes the choice of occupations and professions the great difficulty of a parent; with those yet young it annihilates all chance of that education which should be the sole business of their tender years. And babes,—what is their food? Their milk, butter, bread, sugar,—all heavily taxed, or else their prices raised by the influence of taxation; as if not even the babe at the breast was to be spared, but there was the hard hand of monopoly interposed to dry up the resources of its nourishment; to stop whatever could be administered to it from without to advance its growth; to show its own unholy and infernal character, by keeping up that degree of mortality which, even in this country, makes life in such numerous instances but a short prelude to the grave.

Never let it be thought that this agitation is so limited as only to refer to a question, or a series of questions; that it is only one particular matter, or that it is an abstraction,

that is in conflict. There is much more in it than this: the aim and tendency is, that Free Trade should become the policy of this nation; and in its becoming the policy of the nation, how much is involved! For as different nations, in ancient and modern times, have had each their characteristic policy—as one was democracy, and another absolutism, and another conquest—so it is desirable that Free Trade should be the characteristic of the national policy of this great industrial people to which we belong; and that, being so, it should not only direct this or that particular measure, but affect, as it must and will eventually, all institutions, all proceedings, arrangements, operations of society, all home legislation, and all foreign relations.

In what an amicable position with all the world would a nation be whose policy was Free Trade! What jealousy could it excite? If it is said abroad, "England arms, let us arm too," this implies expense, trouble, violent dispositions, an outbreak of passion, on both sides insult and injury; but to say, "England trades, let us trade also," involves no harm to any body, but much good to all. There would be no talk then of bombarding, none of invading, our country. Invading! What would the invasion be? Why, the landing of cargoes of corn would be the only invasion we should look for; and we should return it by the invasion of cotton on other shores. Countries may go on thus invading one another without any mischief. There is this great difference as to the champions of the one sort of warfare and the champions of the other,—that military heroes are paid by the country for spreading desolation, but commercial heroes pay the country for leave to minister to its enrichment.

A Free-Trade policy would give an advance to civilisation; we should import other things besides food; we should require luxuries as well as necessaries; and we should send abroad luxuries, too, as good as those which we obtained. Enjoyments would be diffused amongst us; libraries and museums would rise in augmented numbers; parks and pleasure-grounds would extend themselves, and pay a better rent than a wheat-field under monopolist protection. Through all ranks and classes a taste for refinement, knowledge, and truth would pursue its course; and if for a while we should take the start of the majestic world, the world

would soon advance with us: humanity would rise into a proper enjoyment of its nature; and society would assume a condition more truly elevated, and more replete with good, than the world has ever yet witnessed.

To carry all this out there must yet be a continuous effort, and not effort in this country only. These meetings are often graced by the presence of foreigners. There are some such, I believe, here to-night; there always are some, and led, I hope, not merely by curiosity—nor departing merely with the satisfaction of that curiosity—but with some impulse of sympathy, some stimulus to make exertion. I would say to any and to all such: "Help us, help us, for it is the world's cause; it is yours as well as ours. Whencesoever you come, and whithersoever you may go, oh, help, help, in this matter, for it is the cause of humanity! It has no respect of language, government, or country; it is for the well-being of all; and join you with us in exertion for its promotion."

To the gallant Frenchman, if such be here, I say, let not our national rivalry pursue its old course. There has been enough in the long line of our warfare, from the time of our Henrys down to recent years; let that suffice. Look not only at our dockyards, but at our manufactories; not merely at our ships of war, but at our merchantmen, and the stores they take out with them. Wherever your tricolour is, be it the rainbow of peace; and thus may it become unto you a promise of a more glorious career—more glorious for yourselves and others—than that which you pursued even when your victories were most important, and one capital after another surrendered to your conquering arms.

I would say to the Germans, men of a nation of deep and far-going thought, of mind wide-spreading as your own unbounded forests, let that thought turn its direction to the things of earth as well as of air, to commercial principles as well as to antique legends. Be not the slaves of any system of monopoly, however its extension within German limits may seem to secure it from that term which bears a hostile aspect to the policy of the rest of the world. Be not the tools of your Zollverein; but learn that custom-houses should have their proper places, as fortresses of exclusion and repulsion, not at the boundary of any par-

ticular state, but at the very ends of the earth, and mark only the difference of land inhabited by humanity, and that bounded by the wild beasts of the forest.

To Holland I would say: remember the old lesson which you taught the world. You, primeval missionaries of Free Trade, stick to your ancient principles and practices; and Belgians, however severed from you, be one with you in this interest, the interest of all enlightened and industrial nations.

Italy, fair and fertile! where so many fine minds have indulged in speculations that were ages before the world,—you, whose Beccaria taught humanity to legislation as relates to punishment, learn you to legislate for humanity as relates to trade and commerce. Let Rome sustain higher glories than its ancient period of conquest, in that mild conquest that carries the victories of civilisation and peace, truth and justice.

And you, poor exiles from Spain and Poland, or whatever country has cast you out; you who sojourn with us, and can only call yourselves citizens of the world; why, there is that in Free-Trade principles which makes the world worth being a citizen of, demolishing so much of the ancient barriers between nation and nation. We offer you them here, as some consolation in your time of exile and proscription; and when your turn comes—as come it will, I trust, for all exiles in the cause of freedom—when it comes for you or your children, may this lesson be borne back with you, a glad and happy remembrance of that terrible time, and be installed with you in the honours which you may then wear, and the institutions which you may have to form and carry on.

To the Americans I need say but little; they feel how much the battle is theirs as well as ours. I would say to them: A century and a half ago we imported corn for the sustenance of your forefathers; I trust you will soon have the opportunity of amply repaying the compliment, with liberal interest upon the length of time that has elapsed. The independence you have achieved is one which needs no severance of relations as to the interchange of whatever other countries can produce; and in your own vast regions and growing population, you see that which should unite you with all the world; showing

e Old and the New World one at least in this, that they ve learned the lesson of a common interest, and can ite heart and hand in promoting the good of common manity. Your own Channing, with prophetic voice, in nost the last, if not the very last, publication he issued, scribed Free Trade as one of the great tendencies of the man mind; as one of the principles of the age, which s sure to make its way, by a rapid progression, into uni- rsal practice. And were I to lack reasons for describing r feelings on this subject, as something infinitely above e manufacturing, agricultural, or money questions of my untry, as something even above a national policy,—were o require words to express its sacred and religious cha- ter, as tending to realise in the condition of society that nevolence which is a holy bond between man and man, almost partaking of the character of worship, seeing that t is worship in which the sacrifice of true and loving rts is offered, and in which kindly and benevolent ac- ns are wrought,—why, I should give such a description the words of a fellow-countryman of Channing, and a dred genius, who describes, in solemn strain, the ine presence as not merely realised amid the beauties l the wonders of nature, but as also capable of being n by the mind amidst thronging cities and in aggregated wds.

" Not in the solitude
Alone may man commune with Heaven; or see
Only in savage wood
And sunny vale the present Deity;
Or only hear his voice
Where the winds whisper and the waves rejoice.

Even here do I behold
Thy steps, Almighty!—here, amidst the crowd
Through the great city rolled,
With everlasting murmur, deep and loud,
Choking the ways that wind
'Mongst the proud piles—the work of humankind!

Thy golden sunshine comes
From the round heaven, and on their dwelling lies,
And lights their inner homes;
For them thou fillest the air, the unbounded skies,
And givest them the stores
Of ocean, and the harvest of its shores.

Thy spirit is around,
  Quickening the restless mass that sweeps along;
And this eternal sound,
  Voices and footfalls of the numberless throng,
Like the surrounding sea,
Or like the rainy tempest, speaks of thee.

And when the hour of rest
  Comes like a calm upon the mid-sea brine,
Hushing its billowy breast—
  The quiet of that moment too is thine:
It breathes of Him who keeps
The vast and helpless city while it sleeps."

Such is the language which the sight of an immense assemblage like this, animated by one heart and mind, is calculated to impress on one's soul; not the less acceptable that it is in the language of an American poet,—of a living poet; and as the person of Mr. Bryant is not known here, though his name and his poems are well known, I trust I do no offence to the modesty of genius when I say, of a present poet,—whose presence is most welcome. And that from other countries, as well as from our own, the poet and the artist, in all their different modes of appealing to taste and developing genius, have shown themselves amongst us, as well as statesmen, merchants, and politicians, is one of the peculiar and high gratifications of these meetings, is one pledge that the great mind of humanity is going along with us, that the power which has been created belongs to the elements of nature, works in their way, and produces analogous results.

Our agitation, like some of those mighty elementary principles, not merely overturns, but creates; not only destroys, but fertilises. It is like—if we may rely on a late discovery—the electric matter of the atmosphere, which may be conveyed by rods into the soil, and will render that soil fruitful. It is like that power, that electricity, of which the thunder is the voice before which the guilty tremble; which strikes down whatever obstacles impede its course, though they be lofty turrets—feudal or ecclesiastical, the warrior's column, or the ancestral oak which has braved the storms of ages; yet, while it is so resistless, guided by the rod of science, it plays on the grass, and sinks into the ground: and there the grass springs up the greener; the

. of corn is the sturdier, and bears a fuller ear ; the sun
s down calmly from that blue sky which is over all ;
richer fields, waving for the harvest, raise man's grati-
to heaven, and send him on his earthly course thank-
nd rejoicing.

No. XIX.

AT LIVERPOOL.

July 17th, 1845.

MR. CHAIRMAN, Ladies, and Gentlemen, the resolution before you* has so peculiar a relation to the community of Liverpool, that it might at first sight appear somewhat inappropriate that I should be called upon to speak in reference to it; but I trust that this is an impression that must immediately be dissipated, for, when I before had the gratification of meeting the friends of Free Trade in this place, it was thankfully to receive the expression of your sympathy with the free-traders of London, then engaged in an arduous contest. I returned to town on that occasion with a full recollection of your demonstration in our favour, which helped to give strength to the exertions we made, and successfully made, to place Mr. Pattison in the situation of Free-Trade representative of the City of London; and I am here now to express the sympathy and the interest which the friends of Free Trade in the metropolis feel in your proceedings,—their trust that a similar triumph to that which followed your congratulations to us will follow the expression of our good wishes to you, and the hope that as our feelings were identified on that occasion, so we may ere long have an opportunity of looking to Liverpool, and saying, We rejoice to see that great emporium of commerce at length leading the way towards that great national change by which monopoly will cease to disgrace and impoverish the land, and Free Trade in all its extended signification shall become the national policy of this empire.

And this, gentlemen, is the time for those who feel an

* This meeting was called by the Liverpool Anti-Monopoly Association. The chair was occupied by James Mulleneux, Esq. The resolution alluded to by Mr. Fox pledged those present to look to the registration, and to support no candidates who were not in favour of removing all commercial monopolies. It was proposed by Thomas Blackburn, Esq., and seconded by John Smith, Esq., of the *Liverpool Mercury*, from which this report is taken.

interest in the extension of Free-Trade opinions to express their sympathy with one another; to strengthen each other in their exertions; to make known the wishes and feelings of each other throughout the length and breadth of the land,—for we are now arrived at a most critical time. Temporary prosperity,—a partial revival of trade,—the comparative cheapness of provisions,—these have all marked out the present as a most favourable opportunity for dealing with the Corn-Law monopoly, which may now be improved to great advantage, but which, if neglected, may never return, for the change may become inevitably necessary, under circumstances of distress,—in times as unfortunate as these are prosperous. For what, gentlemen, is now the state of things? Every one feels how much depends on the next harvest,—every one is asking the question, Will it be bad or good? This is the time which, in the natural course of things, should be one of hopeful reliance and gladsome expectation, and in which man should rely confidently on that remuneration for his toils which nature and Providence so abundantly provide,—when all fears of changes in the weather should be dissipated by the conviction that in this world the diversity of climate is such, that if the harvest fails in one place it succeeds in another; and that, so long as humanity relies on the resources of the world, it is secured from disappointment by the wise and providential laws of nature under which we live. But such is not the condition in which we are. We have no security in the resources of other countries; we have scarcely any stock of our own in this country; and we are cut off by the monopoly law from the means of suddenly drawing on the rest of the world for a supply; and thus we feel that every change in the weather may involve consequences the most tremendous,—that a couple of showers in a day may raise the price of wheat a couple of shillings the quarter, and that if the sun shines more steadily, it will go down again. We are so dependent upon every change of the atmosphere, that we have to look at the barometer every day to know how to make our calculations, and to go abroad at night to see whether the skies are clear or cloudy, in order that we may have some guess at what will be the price of bread for our families in the next week or the next month.

Is this a state of things that ought to last? The resources of this country might be identified with those of all nations. We might be able to draw from others on any emergency that might happen in this country, and be sure of ever finding a redundant and steady supply; but we are practically at war with the world in this matter; and the war we make upon others recoils upon ourselves. Oh, what would be our condition, should it be in the will of Providence that for one or two seasons our fields should cease to yield their abundant increase! Who does not remember the sufferings and the horrors of three or four years ago? Whose heart does not droop with anxiety lest they should return upon us,—lest dear food should revive the sufferings in our large manufacturing towns; lest the weavers of Paisley should again have to beg herring-brine to flavour their mouldy potatoes; lest men should again be found starving in our streets; lest in the multiplied calamities of the time crime should again extend itself, and our calendars show, in longer lists of offenders, the influence of monopoly upon the progress of guilt; and the sure result of dear seasons following all, and completing the climax in the ravages of disease and death; whilst again should blaze forth, as if they were funeral fires, those flames in the agricultural districts which then told the necessities of the peasantry and the desperation to which they were driven, and the cessation of which, knocking down the sophisms which have been so often repeated, proved that cheap bread is better for labourers in rural parishes as well as for labourers in the factory, and is, in truth, the common interest of humanity, and identified with the peace, the honour, and the well-being of the nation.

These peculiar characteristics of the present time should enforce the recommendations that have been so earnestly given you this evening. They should induce every man who can do so to take care that his name is placed upon the register, that the first moment may be seized for making an impression upon the representative body, that there may be no delay through your indifference or your selfishness; but that if the time of calamity should arrive, you may have clear consciences, may be able to lay your hands upon your hearts, and, while you strive for its mitigation,

feel you had nothing to do with its production. Or if, happily, a brighter period is to come, and the nation adopts the only policy worthy of its empire, and which it becomes all other nations to follow, you may have the satisfaction of saying, "I was one of those who agitated for this,—who struggled for this,—who registered and voted for this. I feel it is the noblest heritage I can leave my children." In times when all these vicissitudes, when this guilt, this delay, when these crimes and sufferings, shall only be matter of history, they may say, "My father may have been poor and low in the world's estimation,—he may have struggled hard,—but he was one of those who, in the time of his country's need, stepped forward, at whatever peril or trouble to himself, and assisted in the accomplishment of this great and good and glorious work."

Let not the heart, then, sicken with the pangs of "hope deferred." We have struggled nearly seven or eight years for this; but what are seven or eight years? The mighty object of changing the policy of the country from being directed to the interest and the aggrandisement of a class, to that of being directed to the well-being of the entire body of the community, is worth the labour of a life,—it is worth the labour of lives in succession. It is one of those objects that should be handed down from sire to son, and never cease until the purpose be realised.

And are we not making way towards it? Do we not, though chiefly in isolated contests, register still higher numbers at the poll at every successive contest that takes place? Is not one sophism after another given up? Does not one party leader after another show his foreboding that the time must come when, on Free-Trade principles, and no other, can the government of the nation be conducted? Has not Sir Robert Peel, in his speech on the last introduction of Mr. Villiers' motion, stripped off almost every rag of excuse for monopoly? Did he not throw over the notion of independence of foreign countries for our supply of food? Did he not throw over the notion of particular classes having peculiar claims to protection? Did he not throw off the assertion, so often repeated, that high prices made high wages? Did he not declare that the policy of

his government was the gradual abrogation of all peculiar protective duties? And is it not our business to help him on in that policy? His degrees are at present too long and too slow,—his paces too short; but Cobden has him by the hand, and will make him step out.

However, although the sophistries of the monopolists have been given up by the premier, they seem not to have been altogether abandoned by his followers. Although they have become too bad for the House of Commons or for the public press, they will yet do occasionally on the hustings. There seems to be such a faith in the gullibility of a portion of the population, that on occasions of public addresses at election contests, the most enormous sophistries may be uttered, the most glaring perversions had recourse to; and I know not that a stronger specimen of this has lately occurred than when her Majesty's solicitor-general was making his acknowledgments to the electors of Cambridge for the favour bestowed on him in having returned him as their representative to this parliament by a small majority of five. He warned the people of Cambridge against the nonsense of the Free-Trade system. He would ask those who supported Free-Trade principles, How, if they were to prevail, were the exigencies of the country to be met, or the objects of government to be effected? Let him ask his master, Sir Robert Peel. His betters and employers have found out that what lightens the people's burdens, and facilitates their industry, and augments their profits, and raises their wages, enables them to bear a weight of taxation for public purposes which would otherwise crush all classes of the community together. Then, again, Mr. Kelly said, "Would they destroy the rents of the landlords, the profits of the farmers, and the wages of the labourers, in order to throw some advantages for a time, and but for a time, into the hands of the manufacturing interests?"

The rents of the landlords and the profits of the farmers! Odd things to couple together, at a time when it is notorious that rents are double what they were fifty years ago, when corn was at the very price it is now, and when the farmers, to a large extent, are paying those rents, not out of profits, but out of their rapidly diminishing capital. Besides, if the competition of what modicum of foreign

corn might be introduced would be so injurious to rent,—if the landlords feel that they cannot bear any diminution in the value of the corn of this country,—why do they allow so much of the produce of the country to be eaten up by hares and rabbits, pheasants and partridges? They thus destroy no small portion of that which would make the difference to the farmer between profit and loss, if he has to pay a rent which he agreed to on the promise of 56*s.* a quarter for wheat, whilst he is only receiving 45*s.* If his landlord would add to his stock, to be distributed in the market, what is consumed by the game, that would put him in a much better plight, and enable him to bear his other burdens with a less crushing difficulty.

If they are so much afraid of competition, why display so much earnestness to get enclosure bills? There is a bill now in progress through parliament to enclose thousands of acres of land. This will all come into competition with existing farms. That will be as fatal to them as if they had foreign competition. The only difference is this, that the foreigners do not pay rent to our landowners, and the occupiers of these enclosed lands will. They care nothing about increased competition, when there is a chance of making the profits go into their own pockets. As for the labourer, with his 7*s.* or 8*s.* a week, we may safely leave him out of the question. He has nothing to fear from the exertions of the Anti-Corn-Law League. His situation can be pressed down no lower. But the principles we advocate will bring advantages to his class; will enable him to leave the fields, where he is not wanted, to make something of his labour in the manufacturing districts, where his services would be required.

"If agriculture were destroyed, if our fields were uncultivated, and our rural parishes depopulated." Rural parishes depopulated! Does this man read the monopolist newspapers? Has he seen the lists which have been given in such papers as the *Morning Herald* of the numbers of cottages pulled down on large properties?—of the way in which inhabitants of rural districts are compelled to herd together in the most humble of houses, because the great proprietor does not choose to have them on his land; but leaves the burden of their support to any who will be troubled with it, only taking care that he defrays no por-

tion of the cost? "If those principles were to prevail, the land must either become waste, or changed in its purpose and character, and the nobility and gentry connected with the land would suffer, and consequently all below them. If they destroyed the aristocracy of the country, what would become of their university, by which the trade and prosperity of the town were promoted?" Here is the course which the partisans like Mr. Fitzroy Kelly have always adopted. If there is a little, exclusive, sordid, dirty, petty interest in their hearers, to that interest they make their appeal. "Think of the advantages," says he to tradesmen, "to be derived from these young gentlemen who attend the university. Think of the plunder you get out of those who pay themselves by plundering the community." Why, it was easy to tell what would happen to the university. The people would be better able to send their children there. There would then be a greater amount of legislative influence in favour of extending the advantages of these ancient seminaries of education. They would become the source of so much more instruction, and spread around them so much love of knowledge, that no man, whatever his situation, could dare to stand up and talk sophistry like this to the inhabitants of a university town.

If the case of the monopolists rests on such arguments as these, why I think Mr. Fitzroy Kelly's present client may say as another client said not long ago, on an occasion when it was attempted to prove that apple-pips could generate prussic acid in a woman's stomach,—which is just as likely as that the importation of foreign corn could poison the country,—as his client said on that occasion, so may his present client say, "I really think the case looks very black against us." Such is the solicitor-general's present brief, but he has taken his retaining fee in another court; and let us hope that by the time the annual motion of Mr. Villiers comes on again, Sir Robert Peel will put a different brief into the hands of the great lawyer, and then we shall have some eloquent argumentations on the other side; we shall be told that the full time is come, and that the total abolition of protective duties cannot be delayed for another month.

Meanwhile we have to look to our cause as only in pro-

gress. We have to put our shoulders to the wheel, and assist in its working. Depressing influences will sometimes be felt, but let our minds be kept steadily fixed on the great object. Let us not consent to any compromise whatever, from whichever side of the House such a proposition may come, or by whomsoever it may be recommended. Let us bear in mind the right of the poor man, certainly the common right of all, but to him most essential, that his earnings be not diminished for the benefit of any class whatever, but that his wages, as the reward of the sweat of his brow, shall have their full worth in the world's market. We cannot too much bear in mind that we are all united, that we have a common interest, a common cause, in every part of the country; and as the cause is universal, so should be the exertions we make to further it. It should not be said by the free-traders in any place, "Oh, the League will do this;" or, "the League will do that" —meaning that because the League is in existence, they need not help themselves. Why, the leading gentlemen of the League do all that men can do. Cobden and Bright rise much like the sun and moon, and only set in one place to become visible in another. In the House and out of the House, in the manufacturing districts and in the agricultural districts, at the registration time, at the election times, they are ever at their post, and toiling in the good cause; and the incessant exertions which they and their coadjutors make will lead to a life-long feeling of admiration and of gratitude in the hearts of their fellow-countrymen. But as to the League doing every thing—why, what is the League in Liverpool? Why, you are the League! The friends of Free Trade are the League in all places. The League is a spirit; it is not confined to the limitation of a human body. Wherever there is sound knowledge and a love of truth,—wherever there are sound heads and warm hearts,—wherever there are men who will give their votes from principle, and not from sordid personal motive,—wherever these are, there is the League. And you, being the League, will, I trust, add a glorious achievement to the great things which it has already accomplished, namely, that of rectifying the representation of Liverpool, and putting it in the van of this great constitutional agitation. That is the place which Liverpool should occupy.

It is most unfortunate that so vast a commercial and industrial population as this should be represented by those who, as yet, have discovered little partiality for Free Trade, unless perhaps in the single article of slave-produced copper. It is true that my Lord Sandon headed a deputation to the premier the other day, to suggest a step towards Free Trade in the direction of copper; they did not suggest Free Trade in the article of brass, though they might well afford to export a large quantity of that commodity. Such a place as this, where Canning and Brougham once contended for the honour of its representation,—such a place as this, which gave influence and encouragement to Huskisson when he first appealed to the legislature to extend the principles of Free Trade, breaking ground in that important direction, and taking steps which showed how far he would have advanced had his valuable life been prolonged;—in such a town as this the whole nation feels an interest,—the whole nation expects that you will come forward with zeal and energy,—that you will assert the dignity of the second commercial port in the empire,—that you will show by your actions how strongly you are impressed with a sense of what is due from you to the world. And you can only perform this duty by sending men to the House of Commons who are in advance of the opinions of the world,—who will seek to enlarge, not only civil and religious liberty, but also the freedom of commerce; making this country resume her proud prerogative—that of teaching the nations how to live.

And what is it that you have to suffer for the accomplishment of this great object? What toil, what drudgery, have you to submit to? It is just to take care that if you have a claim to the elective franchise, that claim is duly recognised; it is just to see that the collector of taxes does not, by delaying his call, cheat you out of your franchise; just to ascertain that you are—what the laws of your country entitle you to be—free men, enfranchised men. This is what the cause requires from you. It is not a degradation, but a privilege; it is not a toil, but the enjoyment of a right; and it assuredly is a duty. In the attempts now made by Free-Trade associations, what are they doing, but endeavouring to carry into practical effect laws which already exist on our statute-book? They are

not innovating on the constitution, they are only endeavouring to bring about such a change that representation shall not be a mere theory, not mere representation in the abstract, but a true, vital, and practical representation; they are endeavouring to work the Reform Bill for the purpose of the nation, as it has hitherto been worked for the purpose of a faction; they are endeavouring to make the constitution a reality; they are enfranchising societies, and their object is to have the state consist, not merely of nominal voters, by influence created, but of men—high-minded men—men that "know their rights, and, knowing, dare maintain!"

And yet we of the League are often told in different places that we are strangers. A silly cry was raised first in London,—and it has done some execution, I am afraid, in Exeter,—that strangers were coming among them! As if we spoke not in the same language, held not the same faith, obeyed not the same laws,—as if our interests were not one,—as if they were not making the lawgivers to whose enactments we should all have to submit just as if we had nominated them! As if any one should be a stranger who brings information, diffuses knowledge, advocates truth,—who opens and solves a great question before the community! Such people, we think, should be welcome wherever they show themselves, and have a fair hearing. Least of all should the epithet be applied to them, that they are "strangers," unless those who use it mean to assert their own strangeness from the interests of knowledge and the claims of industry. This is the sort of feeling in which, in a biographical dictionary compiled by some one tinctured with the prejudices of a class, I found John Howard described as a "very busy, meddling man, that ran about the country peeping into prisons and interfering very impertinently with their arrangements"!

Strangers! What are the best productions of the most enlightened minds of our country upon this subject? Should they, or can they, be foreign in a place that boasts of intelligence? Are Adam Smith, and Mill, and Ricardo, and all who laboured with them to diffuse light upon topics of political economy,—are they strangers to any thinkers, whatever be their extremes in politics? Are

they strangers to the extreme of democracy, where we find the doctrine of Paine, that the commerce of all countries is connected, and that the government that wars upon the commerce of other nations is, in fact, warring upon its own? Are they strangers amongst the extreme aristocracy, when Burke declared, great as was his aversion for the doctrine of natural right, that there were natural rights to be held sacred,—and among them was that of every man to the earnings of his industry, and to facilities for making his industry profitable? With loyal emphasis he affirmed that the laws of trade and commerce were a portion of the laws of nature, which were the laws of God, and, like them, not to be violated with impunity by nations or individuals.

Those who profess their own strangeness upon this matter do not apply the epithet where they might apply it deservedly. If any candidate comes from the Carlton or Conservative Clubs, with money in his pocket, they do not deal with him as a stranger. When the tempter goes in at the poor man's door,—when he sneaks in there,—when he offers to buy, at the cost of pounds, perhaps, the little kitten he sees gambolling about,—when in different shapes he draws his snare, and he has the consciousness of having the victim in his trap, he is not called a stranger in his infamous and diabolical work. And to interrupt the peace and quiet and order of elections,—to intimidate, to overawe, to generate confusion,—these are not called strange; the advocates and the dependents of monopoly own no strangeness in the world but the strangeness of knowledge, wisdom, truth, and justice. I would say to the constituencies of Cambridge, Exeter, and such places, that adopt this doctrine, "If we are strangers, as you say we are, just be as civil to us as you should be to strangers. If we are strangers, do not take our food; if we are strangers, do not pick our pockets; if we are strangers, do not rob our industry and interfere with our exchanges; if we are strangers, at least leave us alone; and if you are enamoured of monopoly and of a bread-tax, why, take them yourselves, and realise the full blessings that such measures can bestow upon you."

Yet worse than the doctrine of strangeness is the notion of neutrality upon such matters. Some thousands

of persons of understanding, calling themselves reformers, at Exeter, stood aloof at the late election. They held themselves neutral. Now, in a matter which concerns the claims of justice and of charity,—in a matter which interests every laborious individual in the country,—in a matter which affects national policy and the character of our government in the accomplishment of those objects for which government exists,—what is neutrality but that sort of treason which induced an ancient lawgiver to enact that in civil strife all who stood neutral should be hanged, and which drew down one of the most awful curses of holy writ: "Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord"?* What public cause can stimulate these men if in such a cause as this they can stand by in perfect coolness, and unconcerned? Why should it excite them that John this, and Thomas that, may be sent into the House, there being no more important difference between them than the distinction between their names? Their obsolete distinctions of "Whig" and "Tory"—their bygone battles—would be uppermost in the House of Commons. They have a minister there who is very gradually destroying all protective duties, and the result of such conflicts might be that they would have another minister who thinks protection a bane to agriculture, but still sticks to a protective duty; each of them wanting that imperative public voice which shall dictate the course they are to pursue.

One could scarcely believe any man sincere upon any topic whatever who professes indifference and neutrality upon this. Are you Reformers? Here is one of the most important reforms, and, in practical operation, one of the reforms the most conducive to the well-being of millions that can be imagined, waiting for your exertions. Are you Conservatives? What preservation can there be for peace and order,—what security against these social convulsions, overwhelming all things in ruin,—but by giving trade its natural course, and leaving industry to its natural expansion? Are you philanthropists? How can you be neutral upon that which concerns the feeding of the poor, and upon that which gives more abundance to relieve their wants, which strengthens the hands of charity, and which enables the people to

* Judges v. 23.

seek for themselves all those advantages of baths and washhouses and better dwellings that you are now busied in providing for them, but which, with untaxed food, they would set about providing for themselves? Not even the religionist has any excuse for standing neutral upon a question of this description. What, is not the city missionary to advocate the most practical mode of feeding the poor? What was publicly reported by one of them at the annual meeting in London not long ago? Why, this, that he felt ashamed to name the bread of life to perishing sinners, because they were in want of daily bread, without the application of which the mind could not be brought into a state to receive religious exhortations.

Whatever your principles, whatever your objects, if you feel an interest in them, you will perceive that, rightly considered, this question lays hold of the true, the good, the beautiful, and the useful in all of them. It extracts utility from all. It appeals to principles, and most deeply connects you with all. It gives a pledge to the world of your sincerity in every one of those directions that should make you heart and soul a free-trader,—one who leaves the promotion of that object not to the toil of others, but takes his own share, and bears the heat and burden of the day as if upon him, and upon him alone, it depended whether this cause should be lost or won. This is the sort of spirit which I trust is growing up in this town, which I hope will show itself forth at no distant day in a manner that will become an example to the whole nation, and which will evince how strong has been the individual impression, the impression upon one and all, of the necessity of letting no opportunity slip, of missing no occasion of increasing your free-traders upon the registration list, and of doing all that can be done by individuals who are determined to accomplish the great object of their exertions. For you have to put down laws which are, in truth, laws against trade and commerce. They profess to be laws for the protection of agriculture. The farmers, however, declare with one voice that they are not laws for the protection of agriculture. They may, perhaps, be blundering as to the effects of the recent change of the law; but their decision is a distinct one, to every candid mind, as to the theory of protection itself. Why, what

would they have? The duty has been at a very high rate for a large portion of the last quarter. Foreign corn is effectually shut out. The duties actually paid under Sir Robert Peel's bill, on the average, have been twice as much —I think they have been more than twice as much—as were paid under the previous bill. This is all that laws miscalled protective can achieve; and yet, by the universal consent of the actual agriculturists, the cultivators of the ground, they are not protected. They had better, then, learn to rely on their own resources, and to adjust with their landlords any questions of rent.

But whilst the Corn Laws have been a failure to them as well as to every other portion of the community, in the production of good, they have been pregnant with mischief both at home and abroad. They have produced retaliation in other countries; they have organised a mighty League against this nation; they have produced a succession of hostile tariffs; they have diminished the frequency and the extent of that interchange of commodities which would otherwise have gone on; they have narrowed the operations of the manufacturers and of the shipowners; by abridging the amount of employment, and leaving it less in proportion to the number of the population than it would be, they have tended to keep down wages, at the same time that they have raised the prices of the necessaries of life; and thus to their full extent, as far as they have been operative, they have been laws against trade and commerce. In fact, the Corn Law is a law against Liverpool, and Manchester, and Leeds, and Sheffield; a law against energy and enterprise and industry; a law against that which has raised our country to her greatness, which has multiplied her wealth, which has enabled her to bear up against fiscal burdens the endurance of which might have been pronounced impossible. It is a law against the means and resources of the people; and all for the supposed benefit of a small class, who would, in fact, find themselves enriched and aggrandised by a more just and beneficent system.

Talk of injury to landed property! When was land ever made less valuable by the wealth and prosperity of those who lived in the country? When have customers, with money in their hands, deteriorated the worth of that

which they would purchase, instead of enhancing it? Would not land, if this country became the great workshop of the world, be worth far more than it now is? If it were made one great garden for labour and industry to disport themselves in, and every grain of corn imported from other countries, would they not pay for it better than the poor, toiling, struggling people, who now in vain strive to profit by its cultivation? Are not stacks of houses on fields better than stacks of barley or wheat? Does not a growing population every where bring wealth with it? And were it not that portions of the landed interest want present means rather than future enhancement in value,—were it not that they look to mortgages and settlements, and not to the worth of their estates,—they would in two or three generations see that Free Trade in agriculture and all things else can never plunge into poverty the proprietors of a land inhabited by a great and thriving body of industrious people.

It is the cause, then, of trade and industry and commerce that calls on you to exert yourselves. And not that alone, for what is the world's civiliser? What but commerce and industry, in old times, led on the human race in their first advances? Where have genius and the arts most flourished, but where they were in their plenitude,—where there were the appreciating many as well as the patronising individual? And if it be said that the age of chivalry has gone, and that that of economy has succeeded, I say that economy, in the course of ages, will bring back a better age of chivalry than the world has yet seen; a higher tone and larger range of thought, of intellectual exertion, and of knowledge, and a better state of general feeling, by which all will rise to a height of dignity enjoyed only by the knightly few in ancient times, and rival them in courtesy of manner, in hatred of oppression, and in a devotion of soul and body to the true, the right, the good, and the beautiful.

Let our industrial population be in that advantageous position in which Free Trade would place them, and many of the evils against which philanthropists eloquently discourse would vanish—wither to the very root. Think you that if the removal of the blight of monopoly were to give that fair play which has been so warmly recommended to-

night, the gigantic powers possessed by the people of this country would not enable them to support their offspring, so as to make it needless any more to call out about child-labour? Would not the toiling poor then, with bettered circumstances, think of the school rather than of the factory? Instead of living on their children, would they not provide for light to be put into their children's minds, and nurture and culture secured for their souls? Would not the vices of intoxication and its kindred results be checked by a system that would lead to the diffusion of knowledge, and a sense of decency and propriety, of the dignity and luxury of life? Whatever is most debasing and crushing would pass away in this general elevation of the great body of the people, and instead of here and there a distinguished individual claiming the eulogy of his fellow-men, we should look around us on manufacturing multitudes, and say of each one of them, as the poet said of one of his favourite heroes,

> "His life was gentle, and the elements
> So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, 'This was a man!'"

No XX.

AT THE FREE-TRADE HALL, MANCHESTER.

December 10th, 1845.

[In October 1845, loud alarm was expressed at the extent of the mischief which it was believed the potato disease had occasioned in Ireland. The newspapers were filled with details of the ravages of an "enemy whose history and habits" were, in the language of the Government Commissioners, "as yet but imperfectly known." The condition of Ireland, and of the country generally, became alarming, and there arose a universal demand for "opening the ports," in order that famine might be averted by the admission of food. Sir Robert Peel's administration seemed in danger, and Earl, then Lord John, Russell issued a letter to the electors of the City of London, dated from Edinburgh, November 22, 1845, and making explicit declarations in favour of Free Trade. As this document possesses historical interest, we have subjoined it *in extenso*.* Numerous public meetings were held throughout the country, and Lord John Russell's conversion was the subject of congratulatory remark. It was evident that the Corn Laws must be repealed, and the only doubt was by whom the good deed would be accomplished. In opening the meeting at Manchester on the 10th December, at which the following speech was made, Mr. George Wilson, who was in the chair, after complimenting Lord John Russell on his change of opinion, said, "If Sir Robert Peel chooses at the eleventh hour to shake off the trammels of faction, and stand before his fellow-countrymen with the charter of their industrial freedom in his hands, then no man will be held as a greater patriot in the meetings of the League than Sir Robert Peel."]

THESE stupendous meetings are altogether unprecedented in history; but they are not more unprecedented than the condition of the country which has called them forth and demands their repetition. We are, indeed, in a position not only peculiar, but absolutely singular. The pressure of coming scarcity is upon us; and yet, as a nation, we turn

* "GENTLEMEN,—The present state of the country, in regard to its supply of food, cannot be viewed without apprehension. Forethought and bold precaution may avert any serious evils—indecision and procrastination may produce a state of suffering which it is frightful to contemplate.

Three weeks ago it was generally expected that Parliament would be immediately called together. The announcement that Ministers

back food from our shores that has been purchased, stored, paid for, and was there awaiting our own consumption, and was in readiness for the approaching season of exigency. Such conduct in an individual would be utter insanity; it

were prepared at that time to advise the Crown to summon Parliament, and to propose on their first meeting a suspension of the import duties on corn, would have caused orders at once to be sent to various ports of Europe and America for the purchase and transmission of grain for the consumption of the United Kingdom. An Order in Council dispensing with the law was neither necessary nor desirable. No party in Parliament would have made itself responsible for the obstruction of a measure so urgent and so beneficial.

The Queen's Ministers have met and separated, without affording us any promise of such seasonable relief.

It becomes us, therefore, the Queen's subjects, to consider how we can best avert, or at all events mitigate, calamities of no ordinary magnitude.

Two evils require your consideration. One of these is the disease in the potatoes. affecting very seriously parts of England and Scotland, and committing fearful ravages in Ireland.

The extent of this evil has not yet been ascertained, and every week, indeed, tends either to reveal unexpected disease, or to abate in some districts the alarm previously entertained. But there is one misfortune peculiar to the failure in this particular crop. The effect of a bad corn harvest is, in the first place, to diminish the supply in the market, and to raise the price. Hence diminished consumption, and the privation of incipient scarcity by which the whole stock is more equally distributed over the year, and the ultimate pressure is greatly mitigated. But the fear of the breaking out of this unknown disease in the potatoes induces the holders to hurry into the market, and thus we have at one and the same time rapid consumption and impending deficiency—scarcity of the article and cheapness of price. The ultimate suffering must thereby be rendered far more severe than it otherwise would be. The evil to which I have adverted may be owing to an adverse season, to a mysterious disease in the potato, to want of science or of care in propagating the plant. In any of these cases, Government is no more subject to blame for the failure of the potato crop, than it was entitled to credit for the plentiful corn harvest which we have lately enjoyed.

Another evil, however, under which we are suffering, is the fruit of Ministerial council and Parliamentary law. It is the direct consequence of an Act of Parliament, passed three years ago, on the recommendation of the present advisers of the Crown. By this law grain of all kinds has been made subject to very high duties on importation. These duties are so contrived, that the worse the quality of the corn, the higher is the duty; so that when good wheat rises to 70*s.* a quarter, the average price of all wheat is 57*s.* or 58*s.*, and the duty 15*s.* or 14*s.* a quarter. Thus the corn barometer points to fair, while the ship is bending under a storm.

This defect was pointed out many years ago by writers on the Corn

would be so in a nation, if the nation and its government were thoroughly identical—if there were not a contrariety of interest, feeling, and purpose, real or supposed, betwixt the great masses of the people and the classes that have for

Laws, and was urged upon the attention of the House of Commons when the present Act was under consideration.

But I confess that, on the general subject, my views have in the course of twenty years undergone a great alteration. I used to be of opinion that corn was an exception to the general rules of political economy; but observation and experience have convinced me that we ought to abstain from all interference with the supply of food. Neither a government nor a legislature can ever regulate the corn markets with the beneficial effects which the entire freedom of sale and purchase are sure of themselves to produce.

I have for several years endeavoured to obtain a compromise on this subject. In 1839 I voted for a committee of the whole House, with the view of supporting the substitution of a moderate fixed duty for the sliding scale. In 1841 I announced the intention of the then Government of proposing a fixed duty of 8*s*. a quarter. In the past session I proposed the imposition of some lower duty. These propositions were successively rejected. The present First Lord of the Treasury met them in 1839, 1840, and 1841 by eloquent panegyrics of the existing system—the plenty it had caused, the rural happiness it had diffused. He met the propositions for diminished protection in the same way in which he had met the offer of securities for Protestant interests in 1817 and 1825—in the same way in which he met the proposal to allow Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham to send members to Parliament in 1830.

The result of resistance to qualified concession must be the same in the present instance as in those I have mentioned. It is no longer worth while to contend for a fixed duty. In 1841 the Free-Trade party would have agreed to a duty of 8*s*. a quarter on wheat; and after a lapse of years this duty might have been further reduced, and ultimately abolished. But the imposition of any duty at present, without a provision for its extinction within a short period, would but prolong a contest already sufficiently fruitful of animosity and discontent. The struggle to make bread scarce and dear, when it is clear that part, at least, of the additional price goes to increase rent, is a struggle deeply injurious to an aristocracy which, this quarrel once removed, is strong in property, strong in the construction of our legislature, strong in opinion, strong in ancient associations and the memory of immortal services.

Let us, then, unite to put an end to a system which has been proved to be the blight of commerce, the bane of agriculture, the source of bitter divisions among classes, the cause of penury, fever, mortality, and crime among the people.

But if this end is to be achieved, it must be gained by the unequivocal expression of the public voice. It is not to be denied that many elections for cities and towns in 1841, and some in 1845, appear to favour the assertion that Free Trade is not popular with the grea

a time got possession of legislative power. They have enforced upon the country this absurdity; they have stained the national character; they are making at this moment our apparent conduct as a people as preposterous as that of the Frenchman in the well-known story of his failing grammar,—his misplaced "will" and "shall,"—"I will be drowned—nobody shall save me;" and so they make the nation say, by its practical condition,—"We will be starved, and nobody shall feed us."

And not only is the position of the country a curious one in the incongruities thus enforced upon its conduct, but also in the darkness in which we are kept from day to day as to the extent of the calamity, and the means which her majesty's advisers, or the people's rulers, have to propose for the mitigation of that calamity. Her majesty herself is said to have learned something of the intentions of her own servants from an opposition journal, which in a day or two is contradicted by a ministerial journal, leaving us only in the midst of perplexity and bewilderment, and that on the most important of all topics,—the very means of existence for a great people through a trying period. There is scarcely an object so remote, or a transaction so trifling,—nothing in the material world, or beyond the bounds of this world of ours,—nothing so peculiar or individual, but what we can get more authentic information about than we can about our own supplies of provisions for the coming months. We have authentic information by my Lord Rosse's great telescope of the number of stars that compose certain clusters hitherto regarded as nebulæ. We have accurate information by Dr. Buckland's scientific researches of the saurians and megatheria of bygone ages.

mass of the community. The Government appear to be waiting for some excuse to give up the present Corn Law. Let the people, by petition, by address, by remonstrance, afford them the excuse they seek. Let the Ministry propose such a revision of the taxes as in their opinion may render the public burdens more just and more equal; let them add any other provisions which caution and even scrupulous forbearance may suggest; but let the removal of restrictions on the admission of the main articles of food and clothing used by the mass of the people be required, in plain terms, as useful to all great interests, and indispensable to the progress of the nation.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,

Edinburgh, Nov. 22, 1845. J. RUSSELL."

We know what the fossil lizards, forty feet long, used to feed upon in their time, many millions of years ago, but we know not what we ourselves are to feed upon next month. Every fashionable arrival at Brighton, every dinner party in May Fair, finds its place in accurate and authoritative statement; and even, thanks to the diligence and the far-sightedness and the communicativeness of the gentleman who writes the *Court Circular*, we know more about the royal baby that will be born in the month of April than we know about the food on which the people shall feed in the month of February.

The perplexity extends through all ranks of society, from the lowest to the highest. Not only is the willing mechanic and the poor labourer in this dense ignorance, but a royal duke tells the world,—not that he knows any thing of the scarcity; he does not come near that point,—not that he knows any thing of the panic, or alarm of that scarcity; he does not probe the matter so far as that,—but he "has heard something of a report of a panic of a scarcity," and he has private information that that report is not altogether to be credited. These confessions of ignorance are ill adapted to excite the confidence of the ignorant mass of the community in those who are raised to eminence by office or by rank. They may stand idle, but time moves on, and whatever of good or evil time has in reserve for us. The inexorable course of events is before us; and too much of bitter experience in past years has taught us what to think of the events that are on their way. Sir Robert Peel has said he will never forget Paisley; we will not forget it either. We take warning by the recollection of those years; and, being forewarned, by the exertion of whatever peaceful energy the people may have, will be forearmed as well as forewarned against the circumstances of the coming period. And it seems we are to have a conflict for that very simple and obvious remedy which the necessities of the time dictate. Individual despotism has never hesitated as to its course; it at once says, "Let food come in from whatever quarter it may." Other countries, not under despotism, but more assimilated with our own, have also set the example. Belgium threw open its ports at once, and from day to day came arrivals of grain from a great variety of countries, very many indeed

from this country,—exhibiting the extraordinary spectacle of the foreign grain which we had in our own possession leaving our shores, much of it in foreign vessels, steering to a foreign port, to feed the subjects of a foreign country; and then we call all this the protection of native industry!

Why are not those whose business it is to advise up and doing? If they delay, it is for us to urge them on. And as to the hostility that is threatened, why, let monopoly, if it will, as it boasts, nail its colours to the mast; the only result will be, that the colours will go down with the mast and the vessel altogether. And I would admonish them, too, to take some heed to the language they use. The honourable gentleman* who just addressed you adverted to that very undutiful godson of mine, "the coroneted fishmonger." I gave him "his name, and he answers to it; I have given him much good counsel,"—and I wish he would attend to that also. He learns his catechism, I am afraid, much as did the tax-gatherer's boy. "My child, what is your duty to your neighbour?" Thinking of his father's avocation, the boy says: "To surcharge him as often as you can."

In this mode does he exercise his duties; and in the course of the hostility he now announces, he has dared to brand with opprobrium the patriotic conduct of perhaps the most patriotic nobleman in this country. He accuses Lord Morpeth of giving his money to an association, meaning the League, for the purpose of creating fictitious votes, and libelling in the newspapers those who differ from him in opinion. And yet he says, withal, that of the integrity, the honourableness, and the sincerity of that noble lord's character there can be no doubt. From which what we gather is this, that, in the Duke of Richmond's opinion, a very sincere, a very honourable, and a very upright man may, nevertheless, be a party to the creation of fictitious votes, and to the libelling in newspapers of those who differ

* Mr. Milner Gibson was the speaker alluded to. He observed, "The Duke of Richmond says, that if the ministers are so perfidious as to propose the repeal of the Corn Laws, he must look to hereditary wisdom, to the hereditary peerage, as his only safety. In 1839 I remember when his grace said that if the Corn Laws were repealed, he would depart from England for ever,—would leave his native soil, and wander remote and unfriended over the world."

from him in opinion. It was not for a man who himself for a considerable period of his life, if he be not now, was a pensioner on the public; for one whose *naïve* confession will not be forgotten, when discriminating between timber and glass,—"We grow timber, but we do not grow glass,"—a man who had amused even the House of Lords by his "tariff" lamentations, who confessed virtually that he had been pocketing 2000*l.* a year for his salmon more than it was worth—a parliamentarily created price, of which he grieved over the loss; a man who quarters the younger branches of his family upon the public purse, instead of upon his own property,—it was not, I say, for such a man as this to dare to raise his tongue against the purity or the consistency of Lord Morpeth; nor is he in a condition, with his own name appended to pamphlets convicted of grossly falsifying quotations from works of authority, to talk of the falsehood or the libellousness of the press.

The League, I believe, has never libelled his Grace of Richmond; but it differs from him in opinion, according to his own dainty phraseology in this matter. The League is of opinion that wealthy proprietors have no business to abuse their legislative powers to private advantage. It differs from him in opinion, and thinks that the wealthy man's hand ought not to be in the poor man's pocket, nor the wealthy man's knife to be slicing off a third from the poor man's loaf. I trust, however, the machinery is at work which will silence the Duke of Richmond. If matters go on as is conjectured in many quarters, he may about the time of the meeting of Parliament receive one of those pithy, laconic notes, with the style of which the public have been pretty well familiarised, from the specimens which have got into the papers, running something in this way: "Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington desires the Duke of Richmond to be quiet. Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington is obliged either to part with the Corn Laws or to part with Sir Robert Peel. Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington cannot govern the country without Sir Robert Peel; let the Corn Laws be abolished." An interesting correspondence of this kind will, no doubt, beam light into the convictions of many of that venerable House, and help us over what otherwise might have been insurmountable difficulties. But, how-

ever that may be, we look not to this or that leader—to this or that House, even; the country looks to you, who are marching in its van in this great advance—you, men of Manchester, who have hitherto braved the foe and led on the struggle. Your grip is now firm upon the neck of the serpent: hold it there. Hold it there; hold it hard; and however the venomous creature may writhe and wriggle, if you do but persevere and keep as you are, with the same tenacity of purpose, at length its convulsions will be over, and the country delivered for ever from the poison and the sting of that mighty reptile.

Of all the impertinent pieces of advice which the present time has brought forth, I think the most so is one that is reiterated in sundry monopolist journals—that if there be a scarcity, we should still be submissive and content. We are told—and this is the statement of the Protection Society themselves—that the crop is an average crop; they say nothing of quality; but they report that as to quantity. Now take their own statement—say that the wheat is up to the average of the harvest: do the people keep down to the average? Have we not been told by authority of 360,000 or 380,000 additions every year to the mouths that are to be fed? What is to become of these 380,000, if our supplies of food are to be kept down to an average of past years? and is it to be matter of conjecture that we have as much food now as we had when we were so many hundred thousands fewer in number? The people grow, and the supplies must grow too; that agency must be employed which is capable of sustaining them. Providence puts this power into our hands. I had almost said it was impious to tell the people they must submit to scarcity—go without food, or get what modicum they can at an exorbitant and monopoly price, and call all they are enduring a dispensation of Providence!

Why, Providence makes ports, stretches the bold curve of the bay, and rolls in the billows, so that they may bear in safety vessels bringing supplies of necessaries and luxuries. Providence makes ports—Providence does not close ports. It was Providence that grew the very corn, the foreign corn, that had arrived in this country, that was in our possession; Providence placed it within our reach: the Corn Laws turn it back, and fly in the face of Providence.

Providence endows the banks of the Mississippi and the Missouri with their abundant fertility, making them capable of becoming the granaries of Europe, and of supplying the wants of our industrial myriads, who provide for the cultivators there the clothing which they need. Providence never sends universal scarcity—there is no such thing on record in all history; where one portion of the world fails in its crops, another succeeds, and there is a general superabundance. Providence gives for all; and the lesson from its conduct is, that all should feel their common interest, and administer to each other's common wants. Providence is accountable for none of these things. Providence lays no rate; Providence takes no tax; and Providence tars no butter.

Wicked, we might say blasphemous, teachers are they who would transfer their own iniquitous doings to the Divine government, representing that as not less oppressive and tyrannical than themselves. Why, if it were as they tell us,—if Providence indeed willed that a class should gain profits by a nation's sufferings,—the only moral would be that of the tempter of old—to curse God and die. Such is the tendency of their teaching in the holy name, which they abuse, and in despite of the instructions of a book every where replete with admonitions that we should relieve the poor and the needy, that "he who withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him," and which, in the various illustrations of the connection of seemingly small events with great, gives us a better notion of Providence under present circumstances than all their teachers exhibit. It shows us the momentary interruption of our own supply tending to the prompt abolition of an enormous iniquity that parts us from the rest of the world; it shows us, in the failure of a crop of the lowest vegetable used for human food, the occasion of the destruction of the mightiest monopoly that ever plundered humanity, and revelled in its sufferings; and as it tells the tale of old, how the shepherd-boy, with his sling and with a smooth stone from the brook, brought down the Philistine giant, so it shows us now the more profane giant of monopoly laid prostrate by the blow of a rotten potato.

If our condition is not rightly represented as an afflictive dispensation of Providence, to which we have nothing to do but submit unmurmuringly, so neither can it be

fairly ascribed to the progress of manufactures—to the commercial system by which, in fact, the country has been aggrandised. This has been a favourite topic with monopolist advocates. They have spoken of our overgrown establishments for producing goods. They once ventured to suggest that the greater portion of London, Manchester, and Liverpool might as well be rased to the ground, and the inhabitants distributed over the country, in parishes, on small allotments, each with a squire and a parson to take care of them. They are frequently reminding us that commerce is "more unfaithful than the southern gale," that she "may shift to other shores her sail."

Now, what does all this mean? There may have been ages in history when the operations of commerce appeared to change their localities capriciously; but what was the commerce of ancient times? Merely the interchange of natural products. It is only in modern history that real commerce has sprung up; it is one of the last results of civilisation, and amongst the grandest. It has sprung up, not in consequence of caprices, but of wants; not for the interchange of merely natural products, but for the distribution of art and capital and industry throughout the world; uniting the nations by the peculiar abilities of different people to contribute different results to the great common sum of good. It is a system that in its very nature implies advance; and I see no reason to imagine that any number of years which our figures can express will find it arrived at a point beyond which there is no progress. Commerce grows like the oak; it may seem a mere sapling, which the passing breeze may level with the ground, but its roots strike this way and that, as if instinctively in search of their proper nutriment; its leaves unfold themselves to the air, to imbibe from it the nourishment it affords; and year after year adds to the rings that circle it, and denote its age, and show the steadiness and equality of its growth. As it strikes deep into the earth, so it extends high up into the air, it spreads abroad a grateful shade and shelter, and the birds of heaven sing among its branches. Commerce flows like the river; it may be confined for a time, when it is yet but small and feeble, by rocky barriers, but it goes on deepening and widening, and fertilising its banks on either side, and towns and cities

rise upon its shores, and it bears upon its bosom the wealth of provinces, carrying it on with it to meet the ocean, where they are to find nature's broad highway to every region of the globe.

And such is the growth, and such the natural flowing, of the commercial power and principle. Why, at this very moment, when articles of cotton clothing seem to be among the prime necessities of life to so many civilised nations of the 900 millions of the earth's inhabitants, not above 120 millions are provided with them. There are seven to one that use your cotton manufactures spread all over the surface of the earth, and all of them able to contribute something from their own regions, which, in return for what you furnish, shall enlarge your wealth, shall add to your enjoyments, shall provide for your multitudes, shall stimulate your arts and industry, and aggrandise the British name by linking it with the world's advancement and the comfort and progress of its inhabitants. See how it advances with us, even here, in this little isle of ours; now intersected, or about to be intersected, from end to end, and across its breadth, with those lines of locomotion that annihilate time and space. Throughout the land the barrier of distance is thrown down, and the galvanic telegraph lends its instantaneous communication. The spirit of commerce does all this. It seizes the elementary powers; it harnesses them; it makes their mighty energies minister to the production of human good and the gratification of human wishes. It bridges the mighty ocean; it extends from our own country to all Europe; it is at work every where.

This system of more rapid communication, and with it eventually—however prejudices may obstruct—of free interchange, is extending throughout the whole length and breadth of Europe. Railroads will run ere long, transversing the course of every mighty stream; as the rivers flow in one direction, the iron lines will be laid down in another, until, throughout all the nations of Europe, there will be the means of a rapid transit from the Ebro to the Rhine, from the Rhine to the Danube, from the Danube to the Vistula, from the Vistula to the Volga. All along with these mighty natural arteries of Europe will the iron muscles be laid down, aiding and coöperating with the

energy of the human frame; and augmenting the strength of all these nations for their mutual good, their mutual enjoyment. And not Europe merely: the New World and the Old are thus linked together; and even the ancient nation, so long secluded, whose inhabitants learnt their wisdom from Confucius, and who have kept aloof for ages from others,—they are becoming one with us; the barriers of space and time, the barriers of superstition and prejudice, all are destined to succumb before the growing spirit of commerce. It puts its belt around the globe, and it is itself as firm and solid as that globe; a portion, too, of mighty nature; a part of the great providential system that formed worlds and suns and systems, and rolls them along in their harmonious motions.

The power that governs our country suffices not at the present moment to save it from the prospect of calamity; but this is owing to the accident, to the unnatural and preposterous circumstance, that those who enrich the country are not those who have a decisive voice in ruling the country. A class interposes, and for a time throws doubt and suspicion even on the workings of Nature and of Providence. It is a momentary obscurity; and the League may warn the monopolists in the words of Gray's bard to the tyrant of his country:

> "Fond, impious man! think'st thou yon gloomy cloud,
> Rais'd by thy breath, has quench'd the orb of day?
> To-morrow he repairs his golden flood,
> And warms the nations with redoubled ray."

And such will be the gladdening sunlight of Free Trade, and its joy-giving force, after this temporary obscuration.

Other counsellors of the public say, "We have got through times of alarm before, and therefore let us hope we may get through again." We have got through them before, but how? In 1825-26-27—the last three years of the former Corn Law—in every one of those years the Government was obliged to let foreign corn in bond out at a reduced and almost nominal duty; they also asked and obtained the power of admitting half a million quarters of foreign corn in 1826. In April of that year they declared —as some ministers and legislators have of late declared—

that they had no such purpose, the Cabinet had come to no decision on the Corn Laws; and on the 1st of May afterwards they came down to the House with their proposition, to throw open the warehouses, and to allow of that extent of importation. We got through in those years, but how? How in a later period? We got through with multiplied bankruptcies, with increased committals for crime, with want extending through the streets of our towns, with incendiary fires blazing all over the rural districts. We got through, but we did so at a fearful expense of privation and suffering, of disease and of mortality.

In the name of Heaven, let us try to get through better the next time! And there is something to encourage the hope; the question is better understood now than it was then; the ways of getting through which were then submitted to will not now be endured. In 1815 there was a sort of instinctive blind outbreak against the passing of these Corn Laws: there were riots, blood was shed in the streets; the people struggled like blind Samson, and like blind Samson were sent back to toil in their prison-houses for the benefit of their taskmasters. But the lancet of knowledge has couched blind Samson's eyes. The physical power of the many and the moral power are now in unison, in an alliance that cannot be broken. There is wisdom to direct the guidance of that strength; and thus put forth, where is the power that shall stand before it? It is coming, we know it is coming; be you but firm, unrelaxing, unbending, in every exertion—every legal and peaceful exertion—that may promote this good cause. New allies are announced every day. Mr. Labouchere, in this morning's *Times*, adds his name to the converts for a fixed duty. They are all coming in, but it is somewhat misnamed to call this leading. Much has been made of Lord John Russell's name as the Liberal leader, because twenty years' consideration has led him to the point which the intelligence of the country had arrived at so long before. We welcome him gladly. I believe he has come amongst us because the cry was so loud and strong. Being made a little louder and a little stronger, it may bring us another Liberal leader, in the person of Sir Robert Peel; and raise it to its loudest pitch, and we may have that great Liberal leader, the Duke of Wellington, in our ranks.

While we remember all this, let us never forget who they are that have done this, and who in the day of triumph should wear the laurels. There has been at times a practice of dealing with works of art that I think ought not to be tolerated. Julius Cæsar is said to have been so pleased with the statue of Alexander the Great by Aristippus, that he ordered the head to be taken off and his own countenance to be put on its shoulders. And I myself once lived in a cathedral town where there was a statue of St. Paul over the great western entrance of the church. The men at work in the repairs knocked St. Paul's head off; the dean and chapter, being too stingy to employ a sculptor, went to some old stonemason's shop in the town, where they found a judge's head, with a long wig on; and there St. Paul stands to this day, with a judges's wig and curls on his head! Now, as preposterous a transformation as this would it be, when in a coming time—I hope in the new Houses of Parliament—the statues shall be erected to the founders of Free Trade, if on those statues should be placed the heads of Russell, Peel, and Wellington, instead of those of Cobden, Bright, and Villiers. Great as may be the political advantage—the advantage in parliamentary tactics—of those eminent names, that is all we can plead for them. The work has been done; the chariot of Free Trade has been driven within sight of the goal; and Russell, Peel, and Wellington at best are only yoked to it to drag it along the few remaining paces to its final destination.

But trust them not. Lord John Russell may not have the power, the Duke of Wellington may not have the will, and Sir Robert Peel, having played the monopolists a slippery trick one way, may play the free-traders a slippery trick another way. Trust in yourselves, under the guidance of that Power which ever smiles propitiously on the true, the just, and the right. There is a piece of advice which was given some time ago, with no very charitable intent, perhaps, to the Orangemen of Ireland: "Trust in Providence, and keep your powder dry." We don't use gunpowder; our weapon is of a very different and a much more potent description. Bayonets cannot pierce it, balls cannot level it. Opinion is a power which no form of physical force—multitudinous or military—can eventually prevail against. But means must be employed; and I say

to you: "Trust in Providence, and keep your names upon the registration; trust in Providence, and multiply your 40*s.* freeholds; trust in Providence, and win cities and counties, and show parliament and the world your unalterable determination that the shackles of trade and industry shall be knocked off for ever." In that confidence you cannot be disappointed. The time is coming—it is clearly coming.

"Powder dry!" No, our cause is not like a cannon; it is more like a steam-engine. It is preparing for its journey, the hour of starting is come, the bell rings, and it rings the death-knell of monopoly. There is a steady hand (*pointing to the chairman*) to steer the engine. There are active stokers to keep up a bright fire (*pointing to Messrs. Cobden and Bright*). On it then moves. Out of the way, calves and pigs! out of the way, or you will be veal and pork in no time! Booted squires and sportsmen, clear the line, or down you go, horse and rider, in spite of all your game laws! Such a train as that would dash through a house if it stood in the way, though it should be a house as old and as strong for its age as the House of Lords itself. On it goes, brightened in the sun, careless of the storm; all good spirits in heaven and earth in sympathy with its progress. Nor shall it rest until it reach its final destination; until we are home,—in the people's home,—a home made happy by freedom, peace, plenty, and progress!

No. XXI.

AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE.

December 19th, 1845.

I SHOULD rather have avoided speaking this evening, had I not been previously announced; not from any indisposition to be in active sympathy with this magnificent meeting, but because of the unpleasantness of the present confused state of the political atmosphere, the uncertainty that hangs over our condition: our parliament not at its post; one administration out, we scarcely know why, and another administration delaying to come in, we scarcely know wherefore;* friends and enemies confusedly mixed, so that we cannot discriminate the one from the other; and the whole political condition of the country a chaos, the darkness of which may be felt, but where nothing is seen; a fog in which one cannot breathe, and where one longs for every coming day to bring some decisive information as to who are to be practically the rulers of the country, what difficulties our cause is next to struggle with, or to what triumphs our cause is about to advance. One longs for some certainty in which to rest; one wants this confusion to have a speedy termination, that we may not have to think and speak hypothetically, that our desires and wishes may not be contingent on something as yet unascertained; and our whole course, like the old Castilian oath of allegiance, which was to obey the sovereign if he preserved their laws and privileges, but if not—not; the negation being often much more important than the affirmation by which it was preceded.

But there are circumstances on which to fall back; there are facts in the state of the country, there are truths in the principles we hold, there are assured hopes in the

* On the 10th December a Privy Council was held at Osborne House, and Parliament was further prorogued. The next day Sir R. Peel's resignation was announced, and Lord John Russell was sent for. On the 20th Sir R. Peel reaccepted office, Lord John having failed in his efforts to form a Cabinet.

prospects opening before us, where we find something like solid footing; and it is to turn the mind away from the uncertainties of the passing day, and to fix it on these certainties, that I would now endeavour to direct your attention. Of these, some are sad and some are joyous; but still they furnish in their combination the elements and materials to which we have to look for the completion of the great work so long, honourably, and successfully carried on by the leaders of the League.

The first certainty, I take it, that we can discern in looking around us is a dreary one; it is, that the country is short in its supply of food, and that its means are not in the best condition for making good the deficiency. At first this allegation was met—as so many truths have been met from the same quarter—by a brazen denial. We were told by the Protection Society, in the first floor of No. 17 Bond Street, that it was an insidious and base delusion; that this outcry of coming scarcity was got up for selfish and interested purposes. We were told that nobody knew —they did not themselves know—what the harvest was; but they contradicted the assertion of scarcity, by the assurance that they would write down to their local societies, and get back satisfactory information. The denial has now faded away; it was too daring, in the face of ascertained facts, to be any longer adhered to. There is a deficiency of supply, there is a peril of scarcity,—and scarcity to a nation is famine and starvation to thousands of individuals. There is peril, or why these commissioners to inquire into the state of the potato crop in Ireland? There is scarcity, or why the rejoicing of the Somersetshire farmers that this season promises to be more remunerative than the last; that is, the price of food will be higher, in consequence of deficient quantity? There is danger, or why these suggestions of all sorts of preposterous substitutes for human food? why learned disquisitions on the different roots that may be brought into play as food, or of the compounds of "peppers and that sort of thing," with which water may be made to comfort the human frame? There is something, there is truth in the apprehension, or why the breaking up of one government, and the difficulties that exist as to the formation of another?

Then, where are we as to the supply that should come

in readily, that the wealth of this country should set flowing in from all other countries, to stay even the apprehension, and to put down the fear of the most timorous as to such tremendous consequences? Why, the sliding scale, with all its boasted operations, is rendered altogether useless; the bad wheat keeps down the price and keeps up the duty; and with eatable corn at famine prices we are turning back importation from our doors. We had a little stock of foreign corn in bond; but, under the operation of the same law, that leaves our shores in the time of our own want, and, amid all our apprehensions, quits our land to seek the more provident, just, and careful regions, that open their ports and invite supplies from other people the moment the danger appears above the verge of the horizon. The fields that should supply us—the rich, fertile fields, of which there are so many thousand square miles on the continent of Europe and in the vast prairies of America—they have not borne the corn that might be sent for now to feed the population of these realms; they have not been tilled, because the restrictive system gave the cultivator no prospect of a market here, however much the food might be wanted. Monopoly here has laid on them in the distance the curse of sterility; it has arrested the arm of the cultivator, and robbed him of his profits and us of our provisions.

To this has that boasted system brought us which has been lauded as though it were the perfection of human wisdom. Here ends the sliding scale, smashed in the moment of trial, ridiculously inefficient to cope with the emergency that has occurred; showing that, from beginning to end, the system has been full of fallacy: false in its profession of rendering the country independent of foreign supplies; false in its promise of promoting cultivation, so that it should be adequate to the demand; false in its promise of giving the farmers stimulating and remunerating prices; false in its declaration of utility to the labouring classes, the proportion of whose numbers employed in the cultivation of the land, as a percentage of the whole population, has been regularly diminishing; false in its promised connection with the stability of our means and the increase of our prices: from first to last one mass of falsehood, engendered by the sordid cupidity

of a class, carried by interested majorities with indecent haste, under the protection of bayonets, in the face of popular commotion, supported by one administration after another, to curry favour with those who commanded votes in the House of Commons, and formed a great body of the House of Lords; prolonged, altered, and tinkered in various ways, in order to meet particular exigencies, but still retaining its original sin; fallacious at the end as it was at the beginning, and deserving to perish—as I trust it soon will—amid universal contempt and execration.

A time of trial and privation is before the people of these lands; they have borne such again and again; but there is something more formidable in the prospect now. It is more distinctly anticipated; its privations in many respects will be aggravated by the general knowledge of the cause from which those privations flow, and the means by which, with wiser and juster rulers, they might have been avoided. The horrors of past times will come back with aggravated force upon us and those great capitalists in the country who, while this matter was not understood, subjected themselves to severe losses; who struggled as they might through times of depressed trade and of heavy losses; who kept their works going by drains on their own resources, or what should have been their own reserved private fortunes; and thus found some sort of employment, although for diminished time, and consequently diminished wages, to the great mass of operatives. Can we, therefore, expect that, now that every body knows that it is not Providence, but unjust laws,—now that an exposed and exploded system is seen to be the origin and source of this,—can we expect of them with any reasonableness that they should make themselves martyrs for the sake of the monopoly under which they suffer and groan,—that they should ruin themselves in order to avert some few of the operations of a law which is still obstinately upheld by its authors,—that they should interpose, as it were, between the dead and the living, and themselves perish in the strife, when they know that it is by the alteration of the law, and by that alone, that master and workman can hope to hold on his course, and get safe through this time of peril?

We have no right to expect any such conduct of them,

nor can we look without apprehension at the mode in which, when there is a deficiency, the food in the country has to be distributed; for if there is not enough for all, do we not know that there are plenty of persons in the country that will be sure to have sufficient for themselves? Do we not know that the division of the deficient supply will be much for the wealthy, and little for the poor; that there will be meat for these, and bones for those,—food for the one class, and garbage for the others; that there will be the same sort of division as between the lion and the jackal, when the prey seized is not enough for the stronger and more rapacious creature's appetite?

Such will be the condition of the several classes; and let no man in comfortable circumstances wrap his warm cloak about him, and hug himself in the thought that, however it may fall with others, he shall get through this time; it will not retrench his table; he has a relish for potatoes, but he can do without them,—he will be furnished with his usual supply of dainties, and will live in his customary state of luxury. Let not any one, I say, be making himself comfortable in this way, for there is an atmosphere of evil that cannot be restrained. If you set up typhus fever in St. Giles's, the effluvia will spread abroad, and press into the purlieus of St. James's; if there be want and hunger and desperation in some classes, it will be felt by others—ay, by the most easy and the most comfortable. They will have to look well to their doors at night,—they will have to barricade their windows,—they will have to take care of their pockets when they walk the streets,—they will be wise to avoid lonely roads, especially if they are known to have money about them; there will be danger every where. Want and desperation are the sources of crime and violence; if we subject England to the privations of Ireland, we shall import the outrages of Ireland, and our comfortable man will find his slumbers broken, and he will scarcely sleep the better for having pistols near his pillow, or, every night when he retires, feeling it expedient to call for his bed-candle and his blunderbuss.

Throughout all the ranks and classes of society, the pressure that is set up too heavily for one portion to endure brings a reaction upon other portions of society. "No doubt we shall get through it;" that is to say, the British

Islands will not be swamped in the ocean, the race by which they are inhabited will not become extinct; we shall get through somehow: but with how many shattered fortunes and broken hearts? with how many families plunged into desolation who had before them the fairest prospects? with how many of the sturdy operative classes starved, and their frames attenuated, so that—as it happened the last time distress visited us—when work is found their muscular strength is gone, and they are unable to do it? We shall get along and survive it; the soil and people of the country willl survive it; but what dreary monuments and recollections of it will be left! What sad testimonies will there be to the iniquity of this system in churchyards crowded with dead corruption, and gaols crowded with living corruption! If I see dismal certainties in the condition of the country, and no appearance as yet of legislative interposition to ward off the danger,—no government at work, no administration in existence,—I turn on the other hand, and behold the people of this country in one of the truest and proudest positions they ever occupied. Come the danger when it may, be the suffering what it will, in the sight of heaven and earth it is not the fault of the people of this country, but of their rulers.

For years now have the great truths of political economy, throwing light on our state interests and duties, been, one may say, studied by the population of the country; they have been the subject of common discussion. Topics that had been confined to the pages of philosophers and sages have been made familiar to public meetings; they have been analysed and compared and deliberated upon. Opinion has gradually advanced, and has been declared again and again in its strength and clearness. Whilst there was a hope in petitioning parliament, the people did petition; when that was turned from with disgust at the disregard with which it was treated, they then looked to themselves and their resources. Money was wanted, and it was subscribed; the registration was suggested, and the people have registered, and will register by tens and twenties of thousands more. No state-pilot sang out from the mast-head that there were breakers; the warning of the danger was not given to the people by the government; the people had to give it them-

selves, and the notion grew up amongst them, and was canvassed, and found to have something in it; its truth was ascertained, but they were left to work all this out as they could. Information was denied by the last parliament as to the progress of agricultural produce in this country,—no official helps have been given now for comprehending our condition; the people have done it all themselves; they have seen the danger, they have sounded the alarm, they are demanding the remedy; they are preparing for the assertion of the only principles that can guide us through this difficulty. They began to assemble first in town councils, remonstrating quietly with government upon opening the ports; then in chambers of commerce, and bodies of that description, still going on deliberately and gradually; then in larger meetings; and now multitudinous assemblages in every great town and city throughout the country—north, south, east, and west—are raising their clamour for our deliverance from this impending storm, speaking in a voice of thunder. Whosesoever duty is neglected, they are doing theirs; and in their great, peaceful, decisive movement,—in the firm step they take,—in the onward ground by which they advance to the possession of it,—we see what in other countries would be a convulsion and revolution, but which here is only the firm march of the people to the possession of justice and the enjoyment of their rights.

Where are those who should have taken this charge off the people's hands? Who should have done this for them? Who should have been foremost? Where is the suggestion of the remedy? Where is the great party that fought for and won the government of the country, and drove the Whigs from office,—that boasted of having gained the perpetual tenancy of the seats they held, and to have the wisdom and the power to render office subservient to the right government of the nation? Where are they—that mighty party, so much talked of? It took ten long years in its formation, and great were the toils and many the expedients that were employed to build it up to its towering grandeur. It welcomed comers from all quarters; there was not a discontent of whatever description throughout the country with which it did not affect to sympathise in order to get its little modicum of support: its recruit-

ing-sergeants were every where offering high bounties; apostates from every principle, and professors of every principle, were alike welcomed into its ranks. There was no principle but what some of its members professed to hold, no principle but what some of its members abjured: it sympathised with the proud aristocracy of Whiggism, and with the fierce democracy of Chartism; it held out its fraternal hand alike to the anti-Roman-Catholic Dissenter and to the Romanising Puseyite; it professed to adhere to absolute monarchy on the one hand, while on the other some of its orators were reminding Queen Victoria of the abdication of James II.; it thought every thing a bait that would catch a fish; and thus collected its band together.

The time of trial came; its proud majority of ninety was ascertained, and then the great party, with the great premier at its head, marched triumphantly into office, drums beating and colours flying—"See the conquering hero comes." There they were safely housed, thence to dispense law and justice to the world; in doing which they are now confessing the astounding truth, that for these four years they have been voting against their own consciences; and all at once, in their pride and plenitude of power, just as the architect was exclaiming, "The mighty structure stands complete;" "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built to the glory of my name?" his Babylon falls to pieces in a marvellous confusion of tongues; the whole vanishes away, and, like the magician deserted by his demons, he is left forlorn. There he is, left alone on the wide waste to endure the pelting of the pitiless storm,—a more pitiless storm from all quarters than has ever assailed any public man in my recollection.

And perhaps it will one day be felt to be too pitiless. There is one thing which all the world seems to have made up its mind not to believe in, and that is, the sincerity of Sir Robert Peel. I cannot profess my faith in it; but if it be true that he has broken up this great party that was banded at his back,—that he has forfeited his own grasp of office and power from a sense that the condition of the country needed measures the reverse of what he had hitherto in some particulars supported,—that the only remedy for their distress was that entire freedom of trade, which his colleagues, or some one or more of them,

would not coöperate with him in producing; if, upon such grounds and for such reasons, he has thrown himself out of his position, and is ready to coöperate with those who will promote the same great ends of securing the freedom of food for the people of this country, why, then, I do say, that if not confidence, he has gratitude; if we do not believe him for the future, we have reason to thank him for that one thing in the past; and nothing in his public life will have become him like the leaving it,—and for that act let him have the full measure of the approval and thankfulness to which such a deed is most assuredly entitled.

Well, then, there is the other party,—those who are not in, although their opponents are out; who seem to take a pretty long time in considering whether they shall come in. Grateful as I am to Lord John Russell, as well as to Sir Robert Peel, for the letter, which is completely intelligible, as well as the resignation, which is not yet completely intelligible, I must nevertheless look with some anxiety to the restoration of the Whig ministry to office. If they do come in, I trust—and I believe the people of the country join me in that hope—that it will be with the determination at once to carry the repeal of the Corn Laws completely unshackled, and to admit of no compromise whatever. This we expect of them, and also that they should omit no means within their reach for the accomplishment of that object. There must be no squeamishness, no deference to absurd and pernicious prejudices.

If, to carry this measure through the Commons, a coalition with Sir Robert Peel be necessary, why, then, there should be a coalition with him. We have had many coalitions for party purposes; the country would not find fault with one for patriotic purposes. If a creation of peers should be necessary to carry the measure through the other House, the country looks, then, to have it done. It wants no delaying, paltering, and temporising, as there seemed to be at one time when the Reform Bill was in jeopardy from the Peers. And why should they not make Peers? Can they make any who will be worse than some who now sit in that House? If such swamping hurts the dignity of the House of Lords, why, all the good that the House of Lords does this country, as far as I know, is not for a moment to be compared with the mischief that the

Corn Law does this country. If a dissolution be necessary, they should dissolve parliament; and, if needs be, dissolve it again. They should give the people the chance of the next registration as well as the last. They should let those who are qualifying themselves to speak out politically,—who are buying their position as county voters,—buying their emancipation at 50*l.* a piece or more,—they should give them an opportunity of using a voice they thus purchase. Let them have fair play; let the registration reform which has been commenced in the north be carried on in the south; let it be extended to every county in the kingdom; and then take the voice of the people of England—and not till then can you get the voice of the people of England—through the means of parliamentary representation. If all this will not do, why, let them throw up office again, and fight out this battle in the ranks of opposition, assured that, if they failed to carry it in the one case, they must succeed in the other.

I would say further to this party, on coming in: Identify yourselves with the people; sympathise with them more than you are accustomed to do in this matter. No doubt some of the noble members of that party are amongst the most illustrious, titled or untitled, that the country now bears; but still, for all that, for all one's gladness to see them there, the old familiar names, if not in every case the old familiar faces,—still, for all that, it does not accord with the tone and temper of the English people at this time; it does not agree with the feeling and notions which this agitation has fostered and matured in their minds, that we should be altogether under the government of lords, though they be Whig lords, or that the business of the country should not have some men of business, trained in the ranks where alone they can best acquire the knowledge of such practical transactions. For some of these the country looks, I need not say in what direction; but it anticipates and demands that the commons of England be represented in the cabinet. As the Whig party may not be so open to admonition when once they are snugly housed in Downing Street, I will go on a little further to say, that they will be wise to whip themselves up more closely to a level with public opinion, and that especially if they aspire again to be the leaders of this nation.

Now, in this question before us—this principle of Free Trade—sixty years ago all the philosophical minds in this country came to an agreement upon the matter. They saw that interference with the people's food was a nuisance, and a thing which no legislature ought to attempt. Thirty years ago, when the first Corn Law was passed—the first of this series of Corn Laws—the multitude of this metropolis had an inkling of the question,—a sort of glimpse bursting into the darkness of their minds; and they offered what rough, rude obstruction they could to the passing of that monopoly act of the present system. Twenty years ago the question expanded itself, and descended from the philosopher to the expositor, was taught by reviewers and by journalists, by those whose office it is to stand between the profound thinkers and the inquiring many; they familiarised the minds of thousands with it, and brought it on another stage. Ten years after this the manufacturers of Manchester found where the shoe was pinching; they traced their difficulties, and the struggles they had to undergo, to this preposterous and iniquitous system. They made up their minds, and they entered on the course which they have ever since so nobly pursued. Five or six years ago we may say that the public generally of Great Britain became decided upon this question, and multitudinous meetings reiterated the intelligent expression of their determinations for an alteration of plans which had worked so mischievously. Two or three weeks ago my Lord John Russell came in, having the advantage, by eighteen days, of the resignation of Sir Robert Peel,—perhaps about eighteen hours of the determination of that right honourable baronet. These two great leading statesmen of the country, thus following at the heels of the farmers, of the meetings and multitudes, of the manufacturers, of the expositors and philosophers that had gone before, coming with all their leading power at the very end of the time, making it a most important point which of them should arrive first at the goal; having, after twenty years' hesitation, the two of them, to run as fast as magicians are said to run upon Hallowe'en, when the devil has a right to take his own,—they accomplished their race seemingly with all the speed arising from the principle of "the devil take the hindmost;" and of those that should

have been first, that should have gone at the head of the people and of the mass of the manufacturers, we can only say, as was said of a certain racehorse, "although he was behind before, he was first at last."

Now, this will not do in carrying out the principles of Free Trade; there must be evidence of a bolder spirit than is here shown. There must be real leading of the country,—leading it on; and it will not do for them to sit, like the gods of Epicurus, in the clouds, enjoying their own leisure and dignity, and looking down on mankind in their toils and struggles. If they would have us rest with confidence upon them, as the men who are to work out the deliverance of the country, let them show themselves amongst us; let them give their active and decided countenance to what can only be achieved by a great movement of the industrial masses; let them come forth and help the power which they invite to back them and strengthen them in office; let us see their subscriptions of thousands towards the proposed quarter of a million; or towards another quarter of a million of their own, if they like, raised among the Whig aristocracy, to combine with that raised by the manufacturers and the commonalty. Let them do this, and there is no strength and confidence, there is no heartiness of coöperation, nay, there is no child-like sympathy and faculty of guidance, that they will not find in the people of this country; knowing whom they trust, as in such a case, with evidence of this sort, they may do confidently with their whole hearts and minds. Let them think over the matter; there is something worth their subscribing for.

As manufacturers count the cost, as they look to the falling off in their orders, as they see how their trade is affected by the action of restrictive legislation, as they put down their subscriptions to the League in some sort as an insurance for the future,—let the liberal aristocracy do the like; let it count the cost or the worth of its stars and garters, and subscribe accordingly; let it count the worth of its fertile fields, and that security of improvement which they will derive from the establishment of Free-Trade principles, and from their influence in enriching the country. Let them count, if they can, what a nation's confidence and gratitude are worth. These are all before

them,—safety, honour, and the noblest powers that man can exercise over his fellow-men; and they surely deserve some demonstration of fellowship in this good cause, and fraternity in what they tell us shall be our common cause; and let it be manifest on their part, and they know very well there will be no lack of responsive demonstration on our parts.

There is a third party in the State of whom something is known in this matter,—or rather, a man with a party in his pocket, which, considering his years, he carries with wonderful ease. Sad is the anticipation expressed in so many quarters that European honour and a European name should be tarnished in the latter years of life by struggling against the rights of a country,—their rights in that most important article, the free importation of their food at times of apprehended scarcity. Oh, could voice of remonstrance reach that old man's ears!—for we may not yet say,

"Down Marlborough's cheeks the tears of dotage flow;"—

could we reach his ears, our language would be something like this: Man, upon whose brows are the laurels of a hundred fights, and in whose pocket are the proxies of eighty peers,—true, you conquered Napoleon; you have his statue in your mansion; look at it well, and its marble lips may seem to speak to you and warn you of a deeper fall than his whom you hurled from his high eminence. Though you were the conqueror of Napoleon, I would say, remember, there are certain differences and contrasts in your characters and histories. You won many a brilliant battle —won it with troops well trained, troops the flower of the English people; while he had to invent the art of war, to baffle the most accomplished generals of Europe with raw regiments who had never before entered the battle-field, nor knew aught but by report of the dangers they should face, or the exertions they had to make; and yet with these he commenced that splendid series of victories of Lodi, Marengo, Austerlitz, and Jena, which will beam and blaze so fearfully for ages upon the page of military history. You, Duke of Wellington, have won principalities and broad estates in many of the countries of Europe; but he did more,—he won realms, kingdoms, crowns, and empires.

You have been the servant of monarchs, and have rendered them good service, supporting for a while their tottering thrones; he made himself the master of sovereigns, and compelled them to wait like menials in his ante-room. You, by Catholic emancipation, freed your fellow-subjects from civil disabilities; he, throughout Europe, opened a career for talents, and showed them the path for energetic exertion, by which any one might rise from the lowest ranks to the highest by the force of his ability. Such has been the difference of your courses. You have equestrian statues; but wander over Europe,—bridges here and aqueducts there, open squares in one place and roads cut across mountains in others,—these are the monumental records of Napoleon; identifying his name with the progress of art and the grandeur of a nation that has advanced high in civilisation. With all this difference, remember, that the date of the Berlin decrees was that of the commencement of the fall of Napoleon. Powerful against armies, resistless by monarchs, he fought against the laws of trade, and they "crushed him like a weed." From that moment hearts left him; the injury inflicted on every country to which his proscriptive system extended alienated their feelings. When he raised fresh armies, they were filled with traitors or thinned by deserters, until at last the tide of battle followed the tide of human feeling, and there ensued his deposition, exile, imprisonment, and death at St. Helena. Duke of Wellington, take warning! remember, that if the Berlin decrees brought on the downfall of Napoleon, the Corn Laws may bring about the downfall of the Duke of Wellington. You would be more humbled in that than the man you vanquished; and with withered laurels, with a stained name, with reverence alienated that was long paid so readily, you would go to your grave, coupled with him you defeated in this, that you both

> "Leave a name at which the world grew pale,
> To point a moral and adorn a tale."

The moral is, that no political ascendency, no mere station, no strength of party, no antiquity of *prestige*, can successfully maintain battle against the laws of nature, of which the laws of trade, as Edmund Burke has taught us, are part and parcel. They are the laws of nature; a mani-

festation of the same Providence, characterised by the same universality and omnipotence. And not only has trade its laws, but opinion,—opinion in its progress according to the circumstances of modern civilisation. I believe that the advance of this agitation is referable to those same principles, and that we shall find in it an exhibition of the operation of those self-same laws. This agitation has grown, as the glacier grows on the mountain-top. The snows descend silently and softly, like the progress of conviction in individual minds; penetrating and abiding, yet not attracting notice. Every passing cloud drops more and more, and one stratum accumulates upon another, and then the wild winds that rage, and the biting frost in its severity, do but knit it the firmer, and make it the stronger and more compact; and still as the seasons return, the winter, which forbids the growth of vegetation, gives growth and nutriment to this same mass in its progress; and through years and ages it accumulates, and is bound together by the freezing atmosphere, firm and fast, like the opinion, the riveted opinion and principles, of enlightened multitudes; and then, by its very growth and magnitude, the time for moving comes; by its own weight it is loosened, it rushes down—the avalanche, and bears all before it; and no trophy of military greatness, no senate-house however venerable, no palace however splendid, no church however towering, can stop its progress; down it rushes over all, turning even the ancient rivers from their courses, and thus sweeps away the monuments of man, proclaiming that nature's laws are like nature's God — are vested with omnipotence; and that they are resisted only to the destruction of their opposers.

In the determination which these meetings evince, in the growing power of popular opinion, in the certainty that, whether we can or cannot rely upon Sir Robert Peel or Lord John Russell, we can rely upon ourselves—in that is our hope and our strength for the future. You have petitioned, you have resolved, you have remonstrated, many of you have registered, and many more of you will possess yourselves of the 40*s*. franchise. You will do this until it is achieved through the length and breadth of the land; and if that does not win the battle, you will do whatever more may be necessary; and the means will be found—

honourable, legal, and peaceable—for the accomplishment of your purpose.

Towards that you are advancing in a march that nothing can resist, because your reliance is upon principles that are everlasting and universal as truth itself. You have identified your cause with the power of truth; that must fail, the experience of ages must be reversed, the maxims of the wisest must be proved folly, before you can flinch in your course: and when once you have worked out this great and good achievement; when you have done what is to be done for grappling with and abating the pressure of temporary suffering; when, beyond that, you have made this country preëminent in the world for the adoption of a liberal and generous policy; when the blessings of Free Trade are felt through the nations as averting wars and keeping down the rage of hostile feeling and antagonistic passions; when experience has taught the most backward of them to acknowledge at last that you have rightly guided them in the course of peace, of prosperity, and of social advancement,—oh, then it will be the disposition of mankind at large to render honour, in the records of historians, to whom honour is due; and in that pyramid which the world will pile in commemoration of this grand event—of this peaceful, just, and fraternal policy—there may be the names of political and party leaders at the base, but above them will be the names of philosophers—of Adam Smith and other enlightened men—whose works made the subject understood, and prepared the way for those blessed changes; and above them will be the practical men—your Bright and Cobden, and their fellow-labourers—the real abolishers of the Corn Law, so far as individuals are able to achieve such a result; above them, and above all, will be the inscription of the world's gratitude to the people of England, for that they enforced the adoption of a Free-Trade policy.

Well is it that you should raise your voice for marshalling on this mighty and blessed change, now when the exigencies of the time render immediate action necessary; and I will add, that you should do it now is not unfitting at this particular season of the year; for if there be a cause—if there ever has been a cause—discussed in public meetings, intermixed with political antagonisms, which

deserves the name of "holy, sacred, and Christian," it is this. And when you raise, as you do, your shouts of gratitude and acclamation for the abolition of restriction, and for the establishment of a brotherly policy, inducing brotherly love among all varieties of the human species, you are, in fact, sending back the echo of earth to the song of angels of "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men."

No. XXII.

AT THE FREE-TRADE HALL, MANCHESTER.

January 15th, 1846.

THE little month which has elapsed since I last stood upon this platform has been rendered memorable by a proceeding which will long influence the course of events in this country, and eventually in other countries; I mean that bold challenge which you, the men of Manchester, have thrown down to monopoly for a five years' conflict, if they dare that conflict, and with a spirit that, after that is done, shows your readiness for five years more, should such a thing be necessary for the accomplishment of your purposes. Oh, you have not been idle; you have not only been making cotton, but you have been making history. You have been providing material, and not raw material, for the future annals of our country. Elsewhere there has been change,—here there has been progress. Elsewhere there has been shifting and turning out and turning in again, showing that modern history, like old houses, may have long passages that lead to nothing. But you have shown here a short passage that leads to something, presenting a great and tangible object at once attained, and that attainment a presage and security for a yet greater and more magnificent and enduring result, to be realised through its agency. It indicates a spirit before which all opposition must quail. It shows that you have taken up this cause as those who remonstrate against slavery,—for white slavery it is, as much as ever the treatment of the negroes was black slavery: the lords of food are the lords of persons all the world over; and those who control what you eat have their fetters and their brand upon you as much as if you were their serfs and vassals. They know this; their own statements show a perception of such a truth.

There has been already so masterly a handling of the late Protection-Society meeting, that I am almost ashamed to draw back your attention to it; but although the harvest has

been reaped, a few gleanings are left, of which I may avail myself; and one is the illustration of the assertion I have just made by an hypothesis of my Lord Beaumont. He says, that "such a state of things may happen as that there shall be scarcity in Europe and a misunderstanding with America: what would then be our condition? There might be in America abundance of corn; but there might be, at the same time, a disputed territory. At the moment when we were praying for a morsel of food, a military man in the American congress might be moving a resolution hostile to England. What, then, would be the instructions of our cabinet to the British minister at Washington? A stern necessity would compel them to instruct the Queen's ambassador to say nothing about the disputed territory; or, if the subject were forced upon him by a hostile president, to say, that England was prepared to make any concessions. The British ambassador, instead of contending for the rights of this great nation, would be obliged to bend in lowly guise at the feet of the president, and beg of him to spare the English a bit of bread."

Well, now, this supposition of scarcity all over Europe, and of hostility with America, is about as likely as that some comet should run foul of the earth, and should dash into chaos all the fertile fields of Europe, and cause the Atlantic and Pacific to meet over what is now American land. An approach to such a misfortune may be conceivable through the behaviour of the landowners of this country. They, so far as our interests are concerned, blight the fields of Europe with artificial scarcity; they stimulate America into unnatural hostility; and they want to see us where Lord Beaumont says the British nation would be as to America,—they want to see us at their feet, forgetting all disputed territories, having no "Oregon" to quarrel about with them, and only begging humbly that all rights may be compromised, and that we may be allowed a morsel of bread on such terms as our pockets can afford. We are not going to be so submissive as he supposes the British ambassador would be at Washington. No; we will tell them that we will have the food and the right together; we will compromise nothing in respect to the position which they occupy; we stand on the universal claim of humanity—honest, toiling humanity

—to the subsistence which it earns; and if we cannot have it any other way, we will work it out by the extension of those political rights which ancient statutes and usage confirm to the people of this country; thus at once beating back their insolence, gaining the supply of our own necessities, and teaching them that they should not keep people too hungry, nor trifle too long with their wants, lest the recoil should be so strong as to sweep their own ill-obtained and long-abused political predominance away.

You have given the world a gauge of your perseverance in this cause. It is one which, once begun, can never be abandoned; one which, once begun, has no termination, but its victorious termination in the abolition of monopoly; one which you have already sustained through prosperous times and disastrous times, through evil report and through good report; and let them hold out yet a while,—let them drag us through more change,—let them expose the country to yet more vicissitude,—let them again multiply bankruptcies and disasters,—let them stimulate the howl of want through our villages and our towns,—let them get up any political diversity or bluster of war to turn attention, still it will be all unavailing: through every device, through all change, you will hold on in the course you have begun; and that course can only result in absolute and unconditional success. And they see the symptoms of your success. They let out many facts illustrative of the condition into which they themselves have got. A Mr. Ball, a speaker at their meeting, said, "The time had now arrived when concession must cease, when every member of parliament who was elected by a county population, or by a borough dependent on rural support, must feel that his duty was to support the agricultural interest." And again he tells them, "If the county members were only true to the gentry, the tenantry, and the farmers, the latter class would be faithful to them."

The county members and the little borough dependent on rural support! There all their hopes centre; they give up the towns, they have lost the towns: and how much is implied in that abandonment? To lose the towns in a question of this sort, is to lose the very centre of intelligence and light. It is to lose those bodies who have made the House of Commons what it is; it is to lose the power

which has stimulated agriculture—for you have no such thing as skilled agriculture but where there are large towns; it is to lose the power which has made their lands worth what they are; it is to lose the power which has worked out every great question that the political history of this country knows; it is to lose the asylums for the hunted and starved serfs, who fly thither from the country; it is to lose whatever most plainly speaks the opinions of a great nation; and a confession of the loss is a confession of their own hostility to the common sense of mankind —ay, of the right, the truth, the justice, of the cause which they hold in contest.

Well, they have done with the towns; we have begun with the counties. We are following them up in their own regions. Their concession leaves only this field on which to fight out the remainder of this great battle, and there the struggle is about to be made. It is only a beginning yet, but it is a beginning which woe to them if they abide the termination! The commencement indeed is a splendid one; for which speaks first of the counties? the West Riding of Yorkshire. The foreman of the county jury of Great Britain comes forward to pronounce a verdict of condemnation on this most iniquitous system. The example will be followed, it will go from one to another, and not exactly as the Duke of Richmond says, by fabricated votes. Fabricated in one sense indeed they are, as the savings of honest industry in gaining a freehold; a fabric which is an honourable memorial of the industry and patriotism of the individual, as well as a direct service to the country. But the votes are not fabricated in the sense of those mere nominal holdings by which their stewards and servants have been sent up to the poll. The votes are not fabricated in the sense in which many of their arguments are fabricated,—are not fabricated in the same sense as are their quotations from Adam Smith. And if we come to that, what is the Duke of Richmond himself, his title and his lineage? What are the Richmonds but a fabrication of Stuart lasciviousness, and of Stuart lavishness at the expense of the nation's purse?

Well, but they tell us now they are going to fight this out in good earnest; and should they revoke a portion of their own constitution, their constitution won't work; they

demolish it after only two years' experience. They rescind the declaration, that their sovereignty shall on no account interfere with the election of members to serve in parliament; that is, by thus rescinding the negative they adopt the positive, and declare that that sovereignty shall interfere in the election of members of parliament. That sovereignty of ducal and other titled members, with the Dukes of Richmond and Buckingham at their head, now declares, not that they shall go to the registration courts merely, not that they will pay a lawyer, not that they will sanction votes; but that they have changed their minds, and will interfere with the election of members of parliament. This is in the very teeth of all that has been called constitutional. Their determination not to interfere was either right or wrong; if right, why do they alter it? if wrong, why have they been abusing the League all this time for taking a different course? They have had their whole run of accusations; there has not been a meeting at which they have not talked of the unconstitutional proceedings of the League. There has not been an electoral contest in which they have not endeavoured to bring this notion to bear upon the minds of the electors; they have made the country ring with the cry of, "Strangers from Lancashire, aliens interfering with the process of election for members of parliament!" They have taken to themselves the credit of constitutional purity and abstinence. Their hands, forsooth, were clean, and they were perfectly horror-struck at the sight of these enormities. They deliberated whether they should not be put down by fresh enactments, more stringent, on behalf of the right of free and independent election; and now they come forward when there is a prospect of an election at hand; they come forward on the first occasion when they could do any thing, by altering all this, and throwing overboard their own resolution of abstinence; they now will interfere, and that with all their might, in order to emulate the League in the use of its own weapons.

Why, who does not know that they have been interfering all their lives? Where is there a county throughout the whole length and breadth of the land in which they have not told off their voters according to their estates, and in which the issue of elections has not been coloured with the mass of the

property of that county? They have reckoned this as a part and parcel of their inheritance. They have grown voters by a more rapid process, and with greater care for their culture, than they have grown any kind of corn; and now, in the face of all this, with one of the most daring acts of hypocrisy, at the present time—they confess their hypocrisy in the past time—they assure us that they are indeed right, whichever course they pursue; the League being equally wrong whatever may be the measure which it shall adopt.

In the discussions that took place on his rescinding of their original constitution, Sir Robert Peel, as usual, was roughly handled; but their moral code is a remarkable one, for I believe few people would pick out as the most intolerable vices those which they have selected for their distinguished reprobation. This same Mr. Ball says of him, that he was alarmed at the prospect of famine: "Sir Robert Peel became alarmed about famine; he quailed before the public press." Sir Robert Peel cannot return the compliment. They are not alarmed about famine; they can face it, so that it but put cash into their pockets. They are not quailing before the public press; they bear a heavier load of exposure, odium, and scorn than any class of men has ever hitherto been found able to make head against. His vices, such as they esteem them, are not found in themselves; they are free from both. They have the hardihood to bear a country's anathema, so that they can but continue to reap that country's plunder. But they are determined to be active; they will be up and doing; and it is astonishing what they are going to do.

One cannot quite pierce through the whole cloud of metaphor in which it is enveloped, but something very portentous is obviously signified. They are going to rouse the British lion, they will make him roar and shake his mane; in fact, they seem disposed to deal with him like a showman, who stirs up the beast with a long pole that he may exhibit his fierceness. Moreover, they have hoisted their banner—they will stick to their colours—they have nailed their flag to the mast; the Duke of Buckingham helped to nail the flag to the mast, and then left the meeting without speaking, to go home to dinner; the flag remaining flying, I suppose, till he came back. They will

have "No surrender;" they will raise the cry of "No compromise!" They will make Lord William Lennox poet laureate; they will distribute over the country the worst verses any body ever saw; they will burn the *Times*. Don Quixote only rode a tilt against windmills; the Duke of Richmond will ride a tilt against cotton-mills. He apologises for his speaking, on the excuse of a bullet in his lungs: there must have been a mistake, I imagine, in the locality. The absorbing process of the system must by this time have changed its place; instead of lead in the lungs, it is a bullet in the brain, and very ill does it perform the functions of the brain. It serves him, however, to threaten with; he accumulates horror upon horror; although no conjuror, he seems to adopt the imprecations of the witch in *Macbeth*,

> "Like a rat without a tail,
> I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do."

Well, let them do. The enemies of monopoly have already, even now, an organisation that can feel no disinclination, if a struggle must come, to fight it out with the Duke of Richmond's class. It is for them to consider and to measure their forces; they are but the few against the many. Three hundred of them though there might be, they are not Spartans,—no, not with all their love of Greece. Willis's Rooms in St. James's is no Thermopylæ, that they can long defend it against the myriads arrayed against them, who are not barbarian myriads, but champions of the nation's civilisation.

But they claim to be the majority. "The agricultural interest," says one speaker, "is the majority of the nation." How do they make that out, I should like to know? Why, to do that, they take some statistical tables, in which they find put down, perhaps exclusively, the number of those engaged in some one sort of mills; and they say, "There are only so many in the country; why, then, all the rest are agriculturalists, and there's a majority." Well, then, there are millions who have been, with an unhappy facetiousness, said "to rejoice in potatoes;" they put all these down, and reckon them in their majority. There are thousands and tens of thousands that are continually obliged to seek a refuge from their forlorn condition under these

lords of protection,—that have to fly into the manufacturing districts for something wherewithal to get a bit of bread; or have to take that forlorn asylum, the union workhouse; or, worse than that, perhaps, are driven to crime and the gaol; and they reckon them, too, in their majority. There are those pale-faced men that met by the light of the moon at Goatacre to tell their affecting tales, their simple record of their griefs and grievances,—a record enough to make the nerves thrill and the tears flow from every one who is formed of penetrable stuff; and they reckon them, too, as agricultural labourers, into their majority. There are some of a different class, who do not meet by moonlight to tell their grievances, who prefer the dark night to the light of the moon, and who then steal forth to kindle up an unhallowed glare of their own creating,—the men who light up their ricks and their barns; and those go into the majority—they reckon them too. And, last of all, there is Sir Robert Peel himself, with all his faults and shortcomings and uncertainties: he is not a manufacturer; put him down as in the majority: and thus they make up their majority.

Curious mode this of balancing accounts,—precious statistics these! Why, there were 200 delegates. They will not allow delegates on all occasions from their fellow-countrymen; but there were delegates from local societies to a central society; the very thing for which these men or their predecessors sought to hang Horne Tooke, Thomas Hardy, Thelwall, and their followers; and the very thing for which they did consign to a lingering existence—that was, in fact, a barbarian murder—in a penal settlement, Muir, Palmer, Skirving, and Margerot from Scotland. Now they can meet by delegation, to resolve that they will interfere with the election of members of parliament; and then they talk of their majority! Why, if those who are already heart and soul in this cause, if those throughout our populous towns, and over all the rural districts too, were but to show themselves in their multitude and strength, they could sweep the whole clique of them from the face of the earth, and they would never be missed; the world would know nothing of their loss. England, as a nation, would be England still, as wise and great, as free and glorious, as ever England was while Richmonds as yet

had no existence on the face of the earth. Not only are they the few against the many, but their cause is that of assumption against experience,—and the lessons of experience embodied in economical philosophy. They go on with the same account from time to time of independence of foreign countries, as if it was not also independence of foreign countries upon us. They go on with that often-repeated story of low prices and low wages, and heed not the events that are passing before their eyes from year to year.

When has the test of experience been appealed to,—when or where, if not on this topic? Why, Mr. Cobden has stood up in Covent-Garden Theatre from year to year, and told how the system would work: told how, if harvests were abundant, it would affect this question; how, if harvests were deficient, the country would feel it; shown the connection of the price of food with the prosperity of trade. And no prediction has been so punctually verified, as the circling seasons have gone their round; and they, witnessing all this, yet cannot learn from year to year and from month to month. Every man of philosophical mind that has written, every statistician that has accumulated his facts and arranged them in tables, all come to the same conclusion. There is no exception amongst them all. The light of knowledge, the testimony of experience,—these are with us. It is against these that they wage a warfare that must be as unsuccessful in its results as it is preposterous in its characteristics.

To take another view of the struggle: their cause is that of ignorance against intelligence,—and I say this advisedly. Wherever they may have been taught, whatever school, college, or university may have reared them,—nay, though some of them may have gone to two universities—like the calf that sucked two cows, and became the greater calf,—whatever their training, they have shown the most deplorable ignorance—they confess it—and want of talent in the matter. They say at their meeting, that the debating talent of the House of Commons is altogether against them. They were complaining a little while ago that the talent of the press was against them. They wonder how they should be against them, and they talk of going into the market for talent. The *Morning Post*

was advising them to send some clever young men to the House of Commons, to plead the cause of poor, dumb agriculture. They do not see this truth, — that intelligence has a natural alliance with, and a tendency towards, sound views of a nation's economy and interests; that you cannot bribe mind to be wholly false to itself. They may purchase a word-grinding machine, they may set up a rhetorical manufactory; they cannot give that which gold can never buy,—that earnestness of conviction, that lucidness of view, that forcibleness of appeal, which belongs alone to the consciousness of truth and the desire of promoting the nation's advance.

Survey the literature of our country, look at it in all its phases. There are some indulging in the remotest speculations of philosophy, and yet blending them with the vivid realisation of the scenes of past history, like Thomas Carlyle. There are some crowning her melodious songs in solitude, pouring forth the poet's soliloquy, like Tennyson. There are some working out in the details of imaginary facts the operation of real causes, like Harriet Martineau. There are bards of various kinds—our Leigh Hunts, and Brownings, and Landons—each in their way rendering song the eloquence of truth. There are some, like Forster, writing lives of statesmen of the Commonwealth, and by the history of ancient patriotism keeping alive the flame of modern patriotism. There are some that show what truth and beauty may be in humble life, what passions may agitate the bosom of the labourer, of the carrier, of any toil-worn man; and, while dealing with homely things, perhaps, lending them the likeness of a fairy tale, penetrating to the profoundest truths of human nature, like Charles Dickens. There are some, the light and feathery quality of whose wit attracts the world's gaze, but which, however light and feathery, serves as the wind to the arrow, and sends it home to the heart of corruption, like Douglas Jerrold. And, I say, go the whole round of literature, they are ours, all ours. Ours, from the graceful fancies of Thomas Moore to the stern denunciations of Ebenezer Elliot. They are ours, not by undetected tendency in their own writings; they are ours by explicit declarations. They are ours, all of them, more or less, by what they have written to further this great and good cause. They are ours by a common

pledge—common pledge of a mutual bond—in which we read the worth of intellect, of talent, of genius to a country, and render to that genius grateful homage,—a nobler homage than the patronage of peers ever rendered to hireling songs and strains of luxury. They are ours, I say, and would be ours did the contest assume a darker and more fearful character. The bard of old was warrior as well as bard; knew how to work deeds of heroism which he knew to sing;—and such is ever the tendency of genius. When it comes to the last resort, to the direct appeal, where is the poet?—where?

> "The minstrel boy to the war is gone—
> In the ranks of death you'll find him;
> His father's sword he has girded on,
> And his wild harp slung behind him."

Our opponents are at war with the intelligence of the country; now marking a most propitious era, by every day more and more identifying itself with the wants, the rights, and the exertions of the country at large. There is a new phase in literature, a new and glorious one, and the herald of better times than the world has yet seen. Why, even their own sycophants, those of them who have any mind, and who may for a while have been bribed to prostitute that intellect, will say, as Thersites says of those Homeric hordes drawn by Shakespeare—the hordes who carried their brains in their bellies and their bowels in their heads—they will say, as Thersites says of Ajax and Achilles, "I will go away; I will go where some wit is stirring, and leave this faction of fools." They war not only against the intellect of their own land, but against the common sympathies of our nature, against the intellect of all other countries, and against the great, mighty stream of tendency in human affairs, which, as Dr. Channing said prophetically, in, I believe, the last address he ever delivered, "sets on towards Free Trade, wherever intellect is cultivated, as well as wherever trade is pursued, throughout the world."

What is the world's petition on this question? Why, amongst those petitions which the King of Prussia disposed of so cavalierly the other day, we find a plea, a prayer, to be delivered from some of the nuisances of the

custom-houses. The people want to be less imprisoned than they are by the restrictions that bind them. In France your proceedings are reported; histories exist there already of the League, recording its past exertions, and prepared for the supplement that is to record its final triumph. In America, some of the best works on political economy, some of the amplest and noblest illustrations of Free Trade, have been produced by Transatlantic writers. It was predicted, sixteen years ago, by Judge Cooper, in his lectures on political economy, that the Corn Laws of England would be abolished whenever the different classes — trading, professional, and those of limited income — should see their common interest, and unite against the corn oppression. The time has come, and the prophecy is about to be fulfilled.

The last presidential election in America shows the way in which things are tending there. It shows us that we of the League are at one with the world, and that our opponents are aliens from, and in hostility with, the world. What, would these dukes and their little clique of retainers isolate Great Britain from the nations of the earth? Would they shut out the resources of other countries ready to be exchanged with ours? Would they reduce us to live, first on the corn which they grow, and, that consumed, I suppose, to feed upon one another? Would they bring us back to a savage state, and reduce her majesty Queen Victoria, from being the empress of the greatest state in the world, to be only Queen of the Cannibal Islands?

They are struggling with enduring interests and ineradicable sympathies. Man must feel for sorrow; it is wrought into his frame; it is a portion, one might say, of his physical constitution. The nerves will thrill at the exhibition of pain and agony. It is sad to see nobles shorn of their dignities, bereft of their estates, sent abroad, exiles over the world, to pick up a scanty subsistence, as the old nobility of France was sent. It is sad to see a nobility thus reduced; although perhaps there are some of whom a jury might be disposed to say, as was once said in a case of manslaughter, "We find, sarved 'em right!" It is sad to behold talent and industry buffeting their way through the storms of life, hardly able to make head

against the trials and oppositions that beset them. It is sad to witness the bereavements and afflictions that come to the homes of all mankind and there produce weeping and wailing. But the saddest of all sights is that of a multitude of people without a sufficiency of food. That is what wrings the soul; and the sympathy reacts, strengthening the indignation with which we see that this is not the dispensation of Providence, but the abuse of property, with its influence over legislative enactment. The common feelings of our nature cry out against this; and it is our right for which we stand,—an inherent, natural, universal right. Burke, the eloquent and philosophical, calls it a natural right, even when his own feelings were excited to the highest degree of antagonism, in his endeavour to put down what were then called "the rights of man," when he sometimes went the length of denying altogether that there were such things as natural rights; but food wrung the admission from him, and he said it was most unwise and unjust to tamper with a nation's bread.

It is for this right you stand; for this you throw down the gauntlet in the face of the proud aristocracy. You dare them to the conflict which they provoke, in the registration courts, at the hustings, in the future House of Parliament; you will fight it out; and if "God defend the Right"—the old prayer in duels—we know what will become of those who are only champions for the wrong, for their own sordid gains. They have yet to learn the power of principle. That is something out of their calculation; their politics, for a long time, have gone on without it; and they have done much towards eradicating it from the people's minds and hearts. It has been one of the greatest blessings of the League to have revived this sense of the power of principle, to have taught us again the omnipotence of truth, to assure us that a good cause cannot be finally baffled; and in this strength we feel that we are banded together as by a holy League; the tie is as solemn as if confirmed by the oath of an angel, raising his arm to Him who liveth for ever and ever. It is a tie which every soul acknowledges. It is a principle, not only of politics, but of morality, of religion, to which lives are devoted in the support of missionaries and of martyrs. And who or what are dukes and earls, that they should think

it is for them to stay this tide, and to roll back these irresistible billows, which are moving on to the fulfilment of the purposes to which they were ordained of God and nature?

It is coming—the end of this struggle—its auspicious end. It is coming; and come when it will, the heartfelt testimony will be borne, not here only, but all over the country, that you, men of Manchester, have done it. All else has been subsidiary. Philosophers have laid down the principles, statisticians have collected the facts and arranged the results. Politicians are but the machinery by which these results are to be reduced to legislative practice. Voters, constituencies, are only the intermediate powers to connect public opinion with a representative legislature. Queen, Lords, and Commons will be but formal agents to give solemn record and authenticity to that which —wherever and however accomplished—originated with you, the men of Manchester. It will not be unremembered. The old man, as his daily strength reminds him of the termination of his course, as the bending body shows its inclination to the grave, and the world begins to fade away from his sight,—the old man will go to his rest the more contented that his children will not have his hardships to struggle with, that an easier and a blissful course is before them; and he will die with blessings on the men of Manchester. The future child will learn to lisp its history. It will be early taught the events that have brought the world into the condition in which its own eyes were first opened; and as it traces those pages, its sight cannot but rest on one—the brightest amongst them all—which tells of the good that in this great struggle was wrought out by you, the men of Manchester. You will all of you face your own last great change with stouter hearts, in the consciousness that, whatever else may have been your shortcomings, in this great matter you leave the world better than you found it. And in future times, when there is more of enjoyment on the face of the earth, and when the people, leading more gladsome lives, compare them with the past, to stimulate their thankfulness; or when the struggles of those times come on,—for struggles in this imperfect condition of humanity there ever will and must be,—those who enjoy and those who struggle will—for gratitude the one, and encourage-

ment the other—look back to the history of this agitation and to its triumph; and in their thankfulness, and in their invigorated strength, they, too, will accumulate their blessings on the heads of you, men of Manchester.

OCCASIONAL SPEECHES.

NATIONAL EDUCATION.

A Speech in the House of Commons, Feb. 26, 1850,

WITH

A COPY OF THE BILL FOR ITS PROMOTION.

Mr. W. J. Fox, on rising to move for leave to bring in a bill to promote the secular education of the people in England and Wales, said he could not approach this subject, to which he had undertaken to call the attention of the House, without a deep sense of its difficulties. Those difficulties were, indeed, not the same as in former years. There were many points he was now entitled to take for granted, with which he need not trouble the House. It was no longer necessary to prove that education was good, —good for the individual and for the community; that it leads to the abatement of crime and to improvement of manners and morals. Now, although it was held by many that on the one hand it was the duty of Government to educate the people, and on the other that education was a religious question, and that religion was voluntary, and should not have the interference of Government, yet between these extreme opinions there was, he apprehended, a large number of persons who held that although the Government should not educate the people, yet they would exercise a legitimate function in providing that the people should educate themselves; and it was on that view that he had constructed the measure which he should have the honour to submit to the House. The difficulties that attended the educational question, he had said, were not the same now as formerly. They formerly arose from indifference, but they now arose from zeal. Different religious bodies re-

garded it as something which they might connect with their peculiarities, to which they might make it subservient. The consequence was, that parties avowedly engaged in the same work of instruction and enlightening the public mind were continually quarrelling with each other.

The efforts which had been made for the promotion of education were most honourable to all parties concerned. Of late years the Church had put forth a magnificent degree of fervour and influence in these matters. Dissenters had been the tried friends of education from the very beginning of those efforts which in modern times had spread it so much among the poorer classes; and he believed that the Committee of Privy Council on Education had endeavoured, with great judgment and tact, to encourage those great bodies who have an earnest interest in the cause, to promote their efforts, to stimulate them when lagging, and to guide them when zealous. But what was the state of those great bodies? That they were in collision with each other; that a large section of the National Society repudiated grants of the public money; that a large body of Dissenters, and the British-and-Foreign School Society, also repudiated these grants; that the Committee of Council had striven in vain to bring together these jarring elements; and that as a consequence the progress of education had been stayed, and, he thought, in some respects a retrograde movement had commenced. Now this was a state of things most earnestly to be deplored. He found that the Dissenters, the Congregational Dissenters, who a few years ago declared that they would have nothing to do with Government in this matter, that they could raise a sum of 200,000*l.*, and show that their denomination at least could educate itself, had failed in that purpose. The utmost they professed to have raised was 60 per cent of the amount proposed. Instead of raising 200,000*l.*, they only reported that 60 per cent, or 120,000*l.*, was known to have been expended for educational purposes within this period; that only 7000*l.* had passed through the hands of the board; and they had announced, though with hopefulness as to the future resumption of grants, that for the present their grants to poor schools were suspended. While that was the case with them, how was it with the National Society? In their last annual Report it is stated, that "the support of

schools continues a matter of greater difficulty than the building of schools, as it is found easier to rouse men to one great effort than to induce them to give a steady and lengthened support." And as an evidence that this was not the only difficulty, he found, in one of the reports of the inspectors, that in the north-eastern district the attendance of scholars was much less than it might be; that with accommodation for 33,656 scholars, an average of only 14,791 children had been attending instruction there. In one of the Monthly Papers published by the National Society during the last year, it is stated that "its finances had become more depressed, and the Committee had been compelled to suspend their operations for the present in building and enlarging schools. They had also considered it prudent to make reductions in the instances of St. Mark's College, Chelsea, and the Battersea training establishment; and they also fear that they will be compelled to diminish the supply of teachers at the very time when the exigencies of the Church require that they should be increased." Now he took these statements to be a good reason for calling again the attention of the House to this subject. He knew it was but three years since it was discussed, and very freely discussed; but when they found that the machinery had got into such disorder, and that instead of progressively increasing they were in danger of diminishing their usefulness, it was surely time to inquire what means could be taken to stay this downward course.

There were other reasons why the subject could with advantage again be brought under the consideration of the legislature. During the period that had elapsed a variety of important documents had been published. In the Reports and Minutes of the Committee of Council, and in the evidence afforded by the inspectors, there was very much indeed which bore both on the extent and on the quality of the education as now administered in this country, and showed that in both particulars there was great reason for prompt and careful attention to the subject. As an additional reason for calling so soon the attention of the House to the subject, he might also mention, that in various parts of the country there was an educational movement which the legislature should recognise, and which imperatively demanded attention. The people of Lancashire, with

that energy which distinguished them, had formed a scheme for the complete education of their entire county—he alluded to the proceedings of the Association for the Secular Education of the County of Lancaster. In Scotland, highly advantageous as its position had generally been supposed, in consequence of its ancient parochial system, there were complaints; and these complaints took the same direction, and adopted the same tone. That religious country—a distinction which it had always so honourably earned—felt that more secular education was necessary to give religious education its full efficiency. They had circulated a declaration through the country to that effect, and had backed their opinion with the venerated authority of the late Dr. Chalmers. Besides this, in the metropolis and other places the workpeople themselves were showing a lively interest in the education of their offspring. They had associated themselves for the purpose, if they could, of obtaining it. Many individually had made great sacrifices for the accomplishment of the object; but feeling that they could not in that way fully realise all they desired, they had combined —still adopting the same principle, and pursuing the same object—more secular education than was furnished by the schools at present in operation. This feeling had been yet further tested by the establishment in London of a number of schools, where the training of the faculties of children was carried considerably further than was usual in schools. They were not charity-schools; they were self-supporting, and had even become profitable; many hundreds of the children of the working classes attended—the boys paying 6*d.*, the girls 4*d.*, a week; and these schools had attained considerable popularity with the class for whose advantage they were designed. Thus, both the discouraging circumstances and the popular movement acted in the same direction and led to the same result, namely, that the time was come, short though the interval was, for taking some further step, for making some advances in this matter.

But there were reasons stronger and more urgent even than these. No person could compare the condition of this country with other countries as to education, without feeling that the nation to which we belonged was not supporting its high character and its ancient prerogative.

Through means of the noble lord the Secretary of State

for Foreign Affairs, and by reference to the Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education, he was enabled to give the proportion borne by the children at school to the entire population in various countries of Europe and America. This proportion was:—in Prussia, 1 in 6; in Bavaria, 1 in 7 at day schools, and, reckoning every kind of elementary school, 1 in 5; in Holland, 1 in 8 at public schools, besides those under private tuition; in Belgium, 1 in 9; in Pennsylvania, 1 in 5; in Massachusetts, 1 in 6½. The very highest estimate of the most sanguine calculator of this proportion in England—he meant Mr. Baines—only gave it at 1 in 8½; but if, to make out this proportion, every kind of school, day and Sunday schools, were reckoned, still there was great reason to believe that it was very inaccurate, and that 1 in 13 would be much nearer the mark. Not only would he direct attention to the general deficiency of education, but to its exceeding irregularity. It was not the same in any two counties, nor in different parishes of the same town, nor in different classes of the working people. In the localities where most attention had been paid to this subject, it was reported that in the district of Vauxhall, Liverpool, the proportion attending day schools was 1 in 11½; in Blackfriars, Salford, 1 in 36; in the diocese of Chester, 1 in 20; in Sheffield, 1 in 11; in Manchester, 1 in 14½. Taking the different counties of England, a most enormous variation from the average of instruction was found. In Middlesex, Surrey, and Cumberland, the number receiving education was above the average by 59, 53, and 52 per cent respectively. In Bedford, Monmouth, and Hertford, it was below the average by about 53 per cent in each. In Warwickshire and Cheshire it was above. So that the map of England had its light and dark spots, and they continually intermingled in the strangest manner. While, according to recent returns of the Registrar-General of England and Wales, one-half the population did not know how to write their names, it appeared from well-authenticated returns from 474 cotton-mills in Manchester and the surrounding district, that no less than 82¼ per cent of the whole number of factory operatives could read. The disparity extended even to the sexes. In the National Schools in London and the neighbourhood, there were three boys educated to two girls; but in the Bri-

tish-and-Foreign Schools in the metropolis and its neighbourhood, there was only one girl to two boys. Every where was found disparity, irregularity; and that called for some such measure as he had endeavoured to provide—namely, to excite the localities to exertion, to call forth the principle of emulation between different districts, which should make each anxious to vie with its competitors, and to produce at least as good if not a better and more complete system of general and efficient instruction.

There was yet something more to be considered—the efficiency of education as well as its extent. How had it succeeded in that which was most confidently anticipated to raise a barrier against criminality? He was aware he was touching an argument which those who were disposed to take any logical advantage of an opponent might endeavour to turn against him, and that it might in appearance, but in appearance only, be made to recoil upon education itself. He should endeavour to guard against such an inference, which was altogether unwarranted by the facts. From tables presented to this House, the abstracts of various returns, he derived these very striking and impressive results, showing that education as now administered had had comparatively little effect in the abatement of crime. He took the years from 1837 to 1848 inclusive, and would adopt the classification of criminals now generally used under four heads, namely, of those who were unable to read and write, those able to read and write imperfectly, those able to read and write well, and those who had received a superior education. During the years above mentioned the gross amount of crime had undergone great fluctuations; it had risen, fallen, and risen again; but in the relative proportions of the criminals classified as above there had been no such diversity, but a continuous process, teaching the lesson it was adapted to convey most impressively. For instance, the first—the least-instructed class—had not become more criminal; it had been placed under more beneficent influences than in former years, and those influences had operated. During those twelve years the percentage of those unable to read and write had decreased from 35·85 to 34·40, 33·53, and so on—down at last to 31·93. In the same time the percentage of criminals who had received an instruction superior to reading and

writing had also decreased from ·43 to ·27 per cent. Thus the two extremes showed a decreasing proportion; whilst in the intermediate classes, those who could read and write imperfectly, and those who could read and write well,—that was to say, those trained according to the system of instruction now generally practised in our schools,—there had been an increased percentage: of those who could read and write imperfectly, from 52·08 to 56·38; and of those who could read and write well there had been an increase also, but a very slight one, only from 9·46 to 9·83. The great increase in the relative proportion of criminals had been in those who could read and write imperfectly—children who had been at the schools which now furnished the great mass of instruction to the poorer classes. It was shown by the able papers of Mr. Fletcher, the inspector of the British-and-Foreign Society's Schools, that a similar result obtained. He said: "While the total increase of commitments from 1837, '38, and '39, to 1842, '43, and '44, was 23 per cent, the increase in the wholly ignorant was only 11·6 per cent; and while the decrease in the total commitments from 1842, '43, and '44, to 1845, '46, and '47, has been only 13·2 per cent, the decrease in the wholly ignorant has been 15·6 per cent." There had therefore been an advance in criminality amongst those who received instruction in the schools which at present existed.

Though feeling, with the great majority of the House, that religious instruction was the most important that the child could receive, he had also a conviction that, to make that instruction produce its genuine results, there must be a proportionate admixture of that communication of knowledge and of that training of the faculties which, in common parlance, was designated secular teaching. To the want of this he ascribed whatever there might be of failure in the efforts that had been so extensively made to benefit the rising generation. Without this, the religion they gave the child was mere words, whose meaning he did not feel or comprehend; he might repeat them, but they did not sink into his mind. They required the atmosphere of other instruction, and the stimulus of his own reflective faculties. The results of the gaol returns were also of a kind to bear out this conviction, and to increase our dissatisfaction with education as now generally administered. He would take

the gaol returns presented in 1848—the last he had seen; and he would take the test generally applied by the gaol chaplains—whether the parties committed could repeat the Lord's Prayer—a very legitimate test to apply in this case. The children whose parents taught them that prayer were not generally the children to find their way into gaols—while those children who had been abandoned entirely, the children of reprobate parents, who had not been to school, would not be able to repeat, even as a dry form of words, that symbol of devotion which was so dear to all Christians. He took, therefore, this test to separate the children who had been at the existing schools from those who had not. Of course there were exceptional cases, but they were not numerous enough to affect the argument; and he assumed, if a child could repeat the Lord's Prayer, that he had been at some school or other, British or National, public or private, day or Sunday school. In the county gaol at Reading, out of 631 prisoners there were only 204 who could not repeat the Lord's Prayer, leaving 427 who had gone through a nominal education. In Cambridge county gaol, 61 out of 229 were unable to repeat the Lord's Prayer, leaving there 168 who had gone through a nominal education. In the Cornwall county gaol there were 684 prisoners, of whom 139 could not bear this test, leaving 445 there who had gone through a nominal education. Of 674 prisoners in the Dorset county gaol only 57 were unable to repeat the Lord's Prayer, leaving 617 nominally educated. In Lancaster county gaol, out of 603 prisoners 115 were in this predicament, leaving 488 nominally instructed. In the Sussex county gaol, out of 522 prisoners 80 were ignorant, leaving 442. These returns bore out to a large extent the assertion he had made. He could follow them up by other calculations of a similar description. Returns procured by individuals from a great number of the governors of gaols showed that out of 9387 prisoners, 5875 had been at Sunday-schools, to say nothing of other schools. He was merely giving specimens of the different classes of evidence, the whole of which would fill volumes. Let them take report after report, and they would find analogous results.

The impression which this evidence conveyed—of the needful accompaniment of secular instruction and intellectual training to render religious education valuable, and

enable it to produce its fruits—seemed to have been imparted in a greater or less degree to the minds of almost all the parties concerned. The statements of gaol chaplains, governors of gaols, inspectors of prisons, inspectors of schools, all tended in the same direction. They might give it more or less explicit utterance, but still this was clearly in their minds. The chaplain of the Pentonville Prison said in his last report: "I am compelled again to confess that the proportion of convicts who have been educated in some sort, as compared with those totally uneducated, is fully as high as that which exists between those classes in the general population,—a fact which should lead to the inquiry wherein the popular education is defective." The same chaplain, in his report for the year, said that, of 500 prisoners, 178 had attended some sort of school upwards of four years, 58 less than four years, 193 less than three years, and only 71 not at all; being a little more than four years' schooling, on an average, for each. The prison inspectors had borne similar testimony. In the 14th Report of the Exeter County Gaol, the inspector stated that he had examined 120 prisoners, of whom 21 could not repeat the Lord's Prayer, 43 could repeat it, 51 could repeat part of the Catechism, and 5 could repeat the whole Catechism—giving 99 nominally trained prisoners to 21 altogether untrained. The 14th Report from the county gaol at Bodmin showed that of 684 prisoners, 465 could repeat the Lord's Prayer more or less correctly, and were acquainted with the simple truths of religion, and 80 had a good general knowledge of the scriptures. Thus, 545 out of 684 had gone through the training of the schools. Mr. Fletcher, the Inspector of the British-and-Foreign Society's Schools, appended this remark to his last report: "However essential such a training may seem to any course claiming the name of education, it has yet to be commenced for all the children in our schools, except a few in the top classes of the best of them. And grateful indeed as we ought to be for the degree of instruction which has been spread among the poorer classes, their 'day-school education' is still in its infancy, even in the most favoured places; while in remote, though often not less densely populated districts, its existence is little more than nominal, whatever may be the exceeding number of infants 'kept quiet' in the kitch-

ens of the dames, or of uneducated and untrained teachers earning a scanty pittance under permission to assemble a few children on week-days amidst the superfluous desks and benches of the Sunday-schools." The Rev. Mr. Moseley, whose reports were always deserving of the very closest degree of attention, had generalised more his remarks on this subject in the last report of the schools in the Surrey district. He said: "It is consistent with my own experience, and, I believe, with that of all other inspectors, that there is most religious knowledge in those schools where the reading of the scriptures is united in a just proportion with secular instruction, and where, a distinction between the functions of the day-school and the Sunday-school being observed, something of that relation is established in the school between religious principles and secular pursuits which ought to obtain in the after-life of the child. This is a grave error which confounds religious knowledge with a religious character, and that no ordinary sacrifice which is made of the veneration due to the word of God when it is constantly applied to a secular use." Another inspector, the Rev. F. Cooke, of the metropolitan district said: "Religious instruction is advanced in proportion to the proficiency of children in other studies, and, so far as outward observation goes, the best effects are produced upon the moral principles and conduct."

The Committee of Council was itself aware of this deficiency. The National Society perceived that it had made some mistake in this matter, and was justly chargeable with some deficiency. The inspector, in reporting on its training institution at St. Mark's College, said: "They will be men, I think, fond of study, and desirous of self-improvement. Whether in the estimate they may have formed of the subjects proper to the education of the industrial masses of the country, or in the knowledge they may possess applicable to it, they will be found equal to the exigencies of the times, remains to be proved." This deficiency as to the exigencies of the times was pointed at in the 37th Report of the National Society. After mentioning some comments on the scriptures, which were required, it said: "To this list of books required may be added a work on the elements of political economy for the use of teachers; and a very simple book on the same subject

might be advantageously put into the hands of the children. This is a topic which is now beginning to be discussed among all ranks; and it is impossible to over-estimate the importance of early imbuing the minds of persons with some maxims on this subject, in order to prevent their imbibing any of the false and pernicious theories which are now broached. How to foster the accumulation of capital in a country, and protect it when accumulated, and at the same time to prevent the manual labourer from being unduly ground down and oppressed, is felt to be one of the great problems of the day; and if the science of political economy cannot solve this problem, it can at least prove to the capitalist that it is always, in the long-run, his interest to care tenderly for his workmen; and it can demonstrate to the workmen that they are equally dependent on the capitalist."

To these evidences he would add the testimony of an intelligent observer, Mr. Horace Mann, so well known for his exertions in Boston, and so long connected with schools there, who, not very long ago, had made an educational tour throughout Europe. In his remarks on the schools and the religious teaching of this country, he said: "After the particular attention which I gave to this subject, both in England and Scotland, I can say without any exception, that in those schools where religious creeds and forms of faith and modes of worship were directly taught, I found the common doctrines and injunctions of morality, and the meaning of the preceptive parts of the Gospel, to be much less taught and much less understood by the pupils, than in the same grade of schools and by the same classes of pupils with us." To these observations of an intelligent American traveller, he would add those of a not less intelligent English traveller on the state of education in America. Sir Charles Lyell, in his recently published work, said: "The clergy are becoming more and more convinced that where the education of the million has been carried furthest, the people are most regular in their attendance on public worship, most zealous in the defence of their theological opinions, and most liberal in contributing funds to the support of their pastors and to the building of churches." His inference from these varied testimonies was the same, —not that religious teaching should be in any degree checked, restricted, or abated, but that care should be taken

always to accompany it with such training and instruction as would give it its full force on the mind, and insure its best results on the heart and character.

He would now endeavour briefly to explain the provisions of the Bill which he should ask leave to introduce, and in which he had endeavoured not to supersede any existing education, but to render it all available, as far as possible, for calling forth, in supply of the undeniable deficiency, local exertions in connection with that central superintendence which would render them most efficient. He proposed that the deficiency in the supply of the means of education in any parish or combination of parishes should be ascertained by her Majesty's inspectors. In estimating those means, he would have them take every item of educational machinery into account,—National Schools, British-and-Foreign Schools, schools connected with religious denominations, schools without any such connection, public schools, private schools, if they submitted to inspection; he would have them report on any and all, as affording the means of instruction for the people of that district, subtracting the exclusion which might arise from too great costliness in some instances, and from exclusive religious peculiarities being enforced upon the children or expected of them in other instances. The amount of the deficiency of education being thus ascertained, he proposed that the locality should be invited to supply it; that the inhabitants of the district should be summoned to elect an Education Committee, who should have the supply of the deficiency for their peculiar work, and be empowered to rate the inhabitants for the expense necessarily incurred in carrying out their plans. He would have continued regard to the existing schools. There were two means by which the wants of the parish or district, as regarded secular education, which should be peculiarly the province of the Committee, might be met. First, as in the old schools, and schools already existing, by the remuneration of the teacher for so many pupils as the inspector should report him to have efficiently instructed in the elements of secular education; and, secondly, by the formation of new schools, to be properly free schools,—schools to which any inhabitant of the parish or district should have the right of sending his children between the ages of seven and thirteen, without

charge, without distinction in the treatment and training of the children, with no religious peculiarities inculcated upon them, but with the right reserved and inalienable, the right of the parents to have, at certain convenient times fixed by the master, their children instructed as to religion where and by whom they pleased. He also proposed that, on leaving the school, each child, having conducted itself to its master's satisfaction, and in his estimation deserving by its attainments, should have a present of books made, of which the holy Scriptures should always form a portion,—thus putting that volume into the child's hand at a time when his mind was most fitted for appreciating its grandeur, and for coming under its moral influences. He proposed that the teachers in these schools should be made as independent as possible; that they should be appointed, paid, and dismissed by the local Education Committee, giving them in the latter case an appeal to the Committee of Council on Education. And should an instance occur where the locality was so careless, indolent, and neglectful of its duty, as not to undertake to provide for the deficiency, he would call upon the Committee of Council to step in, and not to allow that locality to become a sink of ignorance, prejudice, and vice, to its own disgrace and misery, and a nuisance to all the surrounding country. The masters he proposed to remunerate by salaries, fixing the minimum at such an amount as should insure them some considerable degree of respectability in their social position. This was of the very utmost consequence. He relied on the schoolmasters for the advancement of education. It was only through their means that we could have any hope of better and brighter results than some we had witnessed. He would stimulate honourable rivalry by the publication by the Committee of Council of a complete Report, from year to year, of the state of education in every district in the kingdom; those reports would find their way into the usual channels and to the table of that House; and thus publicity and opinion would be available both for encouraging the meritorious, and for shaming the indifferent out of their culpable neglect of duty.

He hoped he had said nothing in the course of his observations which could be fairly construed into any thing offensive towards the various religious bodies who undoubt-

edly did so much for education. He proposed to put no restraint upon them. Schools might still be erected and endowed in the strictest principles of Church education; they might be put under the entire control of clergymen, and have bishops for visitors. He interfered not with any of these. On the contrary, those schools, of whatever kind, which had assisted the State in sending out, year after year, a certain number of pupils qualified to take their place in civilised society, would, under his scheme, receive their reward according to the work they had done. The religious bodies would have the opportunity of giving instruction as heretofore, accompanied with their own peculiar religious opinions, and would have the power of making the imparting of education subordinate to what appeared to them a paramount purpose. He did not think the Dissenters would be found objecting to his proposal, because their schools would be left equal freedom. And here he would observe that he adopted the distinction so finely drawn by the hon. member for Surrey (Mr. Drummond) between "education" and "instruction." By education he meant the complete training and drawing forth of the mind. This could only be accomplished by the highly gifted teacher or the affectionate pastor or parent. Instruction, or the mere imparting of knowledge, was a lower task, which was to be accomplished by the agency of the school and the efforts of the schoolmaster. He used the word "education," however, for instruction, as the one most commonly used to signify that which was properly expressed by the word "instruction."

But there was another class of persons whose coöperation was of the utmost importance in working out any system of education—he meant the working people, whose children were to be instructed and trained. Unless they were with the plan, unless they coincided with it and received it kindly, and as a privilege for their children, although it should have the sanction of the Church and of different religious denominations, it would not have that effect which it was most devoutly to be wished it should have. Amongst that class, whose intelligence was underrated by those who had not the advantage of personal communication with them, a sturdy intellect and moral sense prevailed which recoiled from charity; and whatever they might think of their feelings, rights, and privileges, he thought

this sturdiness of intellect, which was invariably the result of self-cultivation, though it might not be accompanied by external culture, was entitled to respect. These people were indisposed to send their children to schools when they found them used for the purpose of proselytism; and thus a suspicion of their intentions was generated which he regretted to say was not always unwarranted. He would read to the House a passage from the manifesto of the working men of London on this subject. They say: "We cannot consent that our children should be apportioned amongst the religious sects; that their plastic minds and nascent judgments should be subjected to an external pressure which would give them a permanent bias towards peculiar notions. This appears to us to be the very way to foment and cherish those theological distinctions which already so unhappily divide mankind. Religion is intended to prepare men for heaven, where the society of the blessed will be united in peace and love. Why should it be made on earth the pretext for cutting up the community into sections, and separating them from one another by unpronounceable shibboleths? We have now for several years been spectators of the dispute going on between the denominations on the subject of popular education. We have noticed that they all agree as to its urgent and imperative necessity; each party has vied with the others in eloquent descriptions of the frightful condition of the working classes. We have been called 'a multitude of untutored savages,' and the places where we dwell have been designated as 'great and terrible wildernesses.' We have sat still, expecting that the religious denominations, in holy charity and pity for our suffering, would for once lay by their peculiarities, which they themselves confess are not essential to salvation, and agree upon some plan by which the resources of the State might be employed to rescue us from our awful condition. But we have waited in vain; the controversy has waxed hotter and more furious; our little ones have been forgotten in the fray, and their golden moments have been allowed to run irrecoverably to waste." He believed these words to be the genuine opinion of the real working men, and their willingness to receive instruction fairly offered gave an assurance of success to be derived from no other source.

It would be expected that he should say something of the cost of the experiment he proposed, but it would be idle affectation to produce any figures on such a subject. He would remark, however, that first impressions were likely to lead to a much over-rated estimate of the outlay. The Association for Education in the County of Lancaster made a calculation with great care, and they found that they could erect schools for the entire education of the county by a rate of $4\frac{3}{4}d.$ in the pound. The expenses of sustaining and managing their schools for children and adults were expected to be covered by a rate of 6*d.* in the pound. Such was the estimate for providing education for the entire county; but it must be borne in mind that he proposed by his present scheme to provide merely for the deficiency of education. Then he asked to have a reasonable allowance made on account of the diminished crime which would result from education and moral training, and for the abatement of the enormous cost of unrestored property lost by theft. The poorer ratepayers would also find themselves repaid, and overpaid, for what they would be called on to contribute for teachers, in the instruction which would be given to their children. Beyond this general view, it would be absurd to attempt to calculate the expenses of the plan with any degree of accuracy.

He had already trespassed too long on the patience of the House, but he would ask their attention for a few minutes longer. He depended on the character of the teachers for the success of his plan. In that view he was warranted by a sound observation of the noble lord at the head of her Majesty's government, made three years ago, when this same topic of education was under discussion. He said: "It has always been my view that you can never effectually raise education in this country till you raise the condition and prospects of the teachers of schools." That was what he (Mr. Fox) wished to do by the salary he recommended in the measure for the masters of free schools. And if any one questioned the essential importance of the masters of schools, he would refer him to the Isle of Man, where the most perfect system of education to be found in the world existed on paper; for every parish had its school, the ratepayers had a share in its management, and every parent was made to send his children to school; yet, not-

withstanding all this, these children were in a more forlorn condition than any children in the country. This was owing to the want of proper and efficient teachers. The bishop, writing on this subject to the Committee of Council on Education, says: "That unless some plan were adopted for raising the character of the schoolmaster, they would be outstripped by the inhabitants of any other part of her Majesty's dominions, and they would not have good schoolmasters unless they raised their position. It was not enough to have convenient schoolrooms; they must also have a sufficient salary, and comfortable houses to reside in." The fact was, that the profession of schoolmaster did not receive that encouragement in this country which was necessary to enable persons to devote themselves heart and soul to their calling. He believed that persons well qualified for the work existed in great numbers throughout the country. He believed that it might be said of the schoolmaster as it had been said of the poet, "Nascitur, non fit." He believed that there existed by nature in some minds a disposition which enabled them to sympathise with children —to feel the difficulties which obstructed children, and to accelerate their progress, for the want of which no amount of learning, classical or otherwise, could compensate. He would therefore throw the competition for masters perfectly open, without regard to training schools. He would invite true men to come forward; he would make aptitude for teaching the great test of fitness, and would reward them accordingly. The function of the teacher was one of great difficulty; it required time, patience, and it was deserving of the best honours which society could bestow.

He trusted the House would judge this subject on its own intrinsic interest and importance, and not from the imperfect manner in which it had been brought forward. He prayed the House to think of the condition of thousands upon thousands of children in this country; to think of the crime which had thriven on soils from which they had hoped it was entirely banished, and which they wished to see preoccupied by better seed; to think of those localities which continued to send forth their "hordes of untutored savages" upon society, who seemed to derive from civilisation itself facilities for becoming more unwholesome annoyances to it; he would have them think of the overcrowded

gaols, the hulks, and the reluctant colonies; he would have them think of the peace, quiet, and good order which would spread amongst the homes of the well-disposed, by the general training and moral culture of the people; he would have them look to the higher motive of patriotism, and consider that the intellect and moral lustre of their country had been a glory superior to that even of its supremacy in arts and arms; he would have them look to the highest objects of all, which, when the purposes of civil society had been accomplished, still remained to be realised in the individual, who, by the means which they could afford, would be better qualified to fulfil the great purpose for which he had been formed by a beneficent Creator.

A Bill to Promote the Secular Education of the People in England and Wales.

[NOTE.—The words printed in *italics* are proposed to be inserted in the Committee.]

ARRANGEMENT OF CLAUSES.

Interpretation of Act; Sect. 1.

Annual Reports on the provisions for Education in every parish to be made to the Committee of Privy Council; 2.

On deficiency of means for Education reported in any parish, the rated inhabitants to be directed to elect an Educational Committee. Proviso, that two or more parishes may be united for the election of an Educational Committee; 3.

The parochial Educational Committee to propose a plan for supplying deficiency of Secular Education. Committee of Education may direct payments to be made to masters of Schools for pupils gratuitously taught; 4.

Where provision for Education deficient, Free Schools to be established, to be managed by the local Educational Committee. Salaries of Schoolmasters and Mistresses. The instruction in Free Schools to be the same for all pupils. No charges in Free Schools. Time to be allowed to pupils at Free Schools for religious instruction. Pupils at Free Schools to be rewarded for acquirement and good conduct; 5.

Infant, and Evening Adult, and other Schools, may be established; 6.

Power to remove Schoolmasters and Mistresses in certain cases. Appeal to Committee of Council on Education; 7.

Power to levy a School-rate. Where parishes united, School-rate to be apportioned; 8.

Educational Committee may purchase and hold land; 9.

Educational Committee to appoint Schoolmasters and Mistresses; 10.

Educational Committee to keep accounts and minutes of proceedings; 11.
Educational Committee to send yearly abstracts of accounts and minutes to the Committee of Council; 12.
If no Educational Committee elected, or no plan proposed, the Committee of Council to establish Schools; 13.
Committee of Council to report on Education; 14.
Act may be amended or repealed; 15.

WHEREAS it is expedient to make provision for Secular Education in England and Wales, and to provide for the greater efficiency of existing Schools: Be it therefore enacted by the Queen's most excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, That in construing this Act the words and expressions following shall have the several meanings herein assigned to them, unless such meanings be repugnant to or inconsistent with the context; (that is to say), Preamble. Interpretation of Act.

Words importing the singular number shall include the plural number, and words importing the plural number shall include the singular number:
The word "person" shall include corporation, whether sole or aggregate:
Words importing the masculine gender shall include the feminine:
The word "land" shall include all messuages, lands, tenements, and hereditaments of any tenure, and any interest therein:
The word "parish" shall include any township, tithing, vill, or other place or district in which a rate for the relief of the poor is levied:
The words "Inspectors of schools" shall denote Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools appointed by the Committee of Privy Council on Education:
The word "Overseers" shall include and denote all persons having power to assess or levy a rate in any "parish:"
The word "inhabitants" shall denote and include all persons assessed to any local rate:
The word "parent" shall include the guardian or any other person having the lawful care and control of any child.

II. And be it enacted, That on the next Annual Reports on the

Provisions for Education in every Parish to be made to the Committee of Privy Council on Education.

after the passing of this Act, and on every succeeding the Inspectors of Schools shall make full and detailed Reports to the Committee of Privy Council on Education of the state of secular education in each parish of their respective districts, and of the adequacy of the existing provisions of each parish to afford secular education for the wants of the entire population thereof; and that in such Reports the said Inspectors shall take cognisance of secular education only; and in estimating the proportion of educational means to the wants of the entire population, private schools which submit to inspection by the Inspectors of Schools, and schools in connection with the Established Church and any other religious body, shall be included; and regard shall be had to the effect of every exclusion from instruction, whether arising from the expense of schooling, from peculiar or special religious teaching adopted in any school, or from any other cause whatsoever.

On deficiency of means for Education reported in any parish, the rated Inhabitants to be directed to elect an Educational Committee.

III. And be it enacted, That whenever it shall appear from any such Report of the Inspectors of Schools that the existing provisions for education in any parish are insufficient for the wants of the entire population of such parish, the Committee of Privy Council for Education shall, by a Letter signed by their secretary, addressed and sent to the overseers of such parish, direct the overseers to summon a meeting of the inhabitants, within a time to be named in such Letter, who shall elect not less than [*five*] nor more than [*fifteen*] of the inhabitants of such parish to form the Educational Committee for such parish; and thereupon the election of such Educational Committee, and the names of the members thereof, shall be forthwith certified to the Committee of Council on Education by the said overseers; and such Educational Committee shall remain in office for *twelve* calendar months from the day of election; and fifteen days at least before the expiration of such *twelve* calendar months the said overseers shall summon a meeting of the inhabitants, who shall elect a like Educational Committee for the year then next succeeding the expiration of the said *twelve* calendar months, and so on from time to time for every succeeding year; and after every such election the said overseers shall forthwith certify the names of the members of the Educational Committee so elected to the Committee of Council on Education: Provided always, that the Committee of Council on Education may, in manner aforesaid, direct the inhabitants of any two or more adjoin-

Proviso, that two or more parishes may be united for the election

ing parishes to unite in electing an Educational Committee, and such united parishes shall, for the purposes of this Act, be deemed one parish. of an Educational Committee.

IV. And be it enacted, That the first elected Educational Committee of any parish shall forthwith propose a plan to supply the deficiency of the existing provisions for secular education in such parish, for the approval of the Committee of Council on Education, and on being approved by the said Committee of Council the same shall be carried into execution by the Educational Committee; and such Educational Committee shall appoint a clerk, secretary, treasurer, or other officer, with such reasonable compensation as they may think fit, to assist in executing the plan so approved as aforesaid: Provided always, that it shall and may be lawful for the Committee of Council on Education to direct that the Educational Committee of any parish shall pay to the master of any existing school, or of any school to be established under this Act in such parish, such a yearly sum of money, not exceeding *ten shillings*, as the said Committee of Council may deem fit, in respect of each pupil who may have been gratuitously taught at such school for one year then immediately preceding, and who shall be reported by the Inspector of Schools to have received sufficient secular education. The parochial Educational Committee to propose a plan for supplying deficiency of secular education. Committee of Council may direct payments to be made to masters of schools for pupils gratuitously taught.

V. And be it enacted, That in every parish where such deficiency as aforesaid shall be reported, one or more free school or schools shall be established under the provisions of this Act, which shall be under the management of the Educational Committee of such parish, who shall appoint the schoolmaster and mistress; and in all schools established under this Act (except the infant, evening adult, and other schools hereinafter mentioned) provision shall be made for affording gratuitously sufficient instruction, which shall be secular only, to all the children of each parish between the ages of *seven* and *thirteen* years; and every schoolmaster and mistress shall be allowed a net yearly salary of not less than *one hundred pounds* for every fifty pupils who shall attend the free school of such master or mistress for one year: Provided always, that the same course of secular education shall be afforded to all the pupils attending any such free school as aforesaid; and all such pupils shall be free from all charges and payments whatever: Provided also, that the master and mistress of every free school shall allow to each pupil sufficient time for receiving religious instruction, under the direction of the parents of such pupils: Where provision for Education deficient, free schools to be established, to be managed by the local Educational Committee. The instruction in free schools to be the same for all pupils. No charges in free schools. Time to be allowed to pupils at free

schools for religious instruction. Pupils at free schools to be rewarded for acquirement and good conduct.

Provided also, that each pupil of any free school, on completing his education, shall, upon receiving from the master or mistress of such school a certificate of approval, be entitled to books of the value of *fifty shillings*, to be selected by the said master or mistress, and one of such books shall be a copy of the holy Scriptures; and such certificate of approval shall relate to, and certify approval of, the continuous and regular attendance of such pupil at school, as well as his acquirements and good conduct.

Infant, evening adult, and other schools may be established.

VI. And be it enacted, That it shall and may be lawful for the Educational Committee of any parish to propose for the approval of the Committee of Council on Education a plan for establishing an infant school for the instruction of children under the age of *seven* years, an evening school for the instruction of young persons above the age of *thirteen* years, and schools for the instruction of deaf and dumb or blind persons, or any one or more of such schools for any one or more of such purposes, and on being approved by the Committee of Council on Education the same shall be carried into execution by the Educational Committee.

Power to remove schoolmasters and mistresses in certain cases.

VII. And be it enacted, That upon the complaint of [of the parents] of the children who may have attended any free school for *twelve* months next preceding, made against any master or mistress of such free school, the Educational Committee shall inquire into and investigate the subject-matter of such complaint; and if upon such inquiry and investigation just cause of complaint, either by reason of incompetency or misconduct, shall be proved against such master or mistress, the Educational Committee shall forthwith remove such master or mistress, and (subject to the appeal hereinafter mentioned) shall appoint some other fit person to supply the vacancy thereby occasioned:

Appeal to the Committee of Council.

Provided always, that in case the persons complaining against such master or mistress, or in case such master or mistress so complained against, shall be dissatisfied with the decision of the Educational Committee upon such complaint, either party may refer the subject-matter of such complaint to the Committee of Council on Education, whose decision shall be final.

Power to levy a school-rate.

VIII. And be it enacted, That the Educational Committee of each parish shall direct the overseers of such parish to levy an annual school-rate for the purposes of this Act on the ratable property of such parish; and such school-rate shall be made, raised, levied, and collected by the overseers in the same manner and with the like powers

and authorities as they by law possess for making, levying, and collecting rates for the relief of the poor; and such rate shall be paid over by the overseers to the Educational Committee or their appointed officer, to be applied in carrying into effect the plan so approved as aforesaid, and for the other purposes of this Act: Provided always, that where two or more parishes shall be united for the purposes of this Act, the Educational Committee of such united parishes shall apportion the school-rate between the several parishes in union according to their due proportions respectively, and the overseers of each parish shall raise, levy, and collect such apportioned rate.

Where parishes united, school-rate to be apportioned.

IX. And be it enacted, That every Educational Committee shall have perpetual succession for the purposes of this Act, and shall be entitled to take, purchase, and hold land of freehold, copyhold, or leasehold tenure whereon to erect schoolhouses, residences for schoolmasters, or for industrial training, for the use of any school to be established under this Act: Provided always, that land purchased by any Educational Committee shall be conveyed free from all stamp-duty whatever.

Educational Committee may purchase and hold land.

X. And be it enacted, That the Educational Committee of each parish shall, with the approval of the said Committee of Council, appoint, and from time to time remove, the schoolmaster and schoolmistress or school assistants of any school established under the provisions of this Act.

Educational Committee to appoint schoolmasters and mistresses.

XI. And be it enacted, That every Educational Committee shall keep accurate and distinct accounts of all sums of money received and expended for the purposes of this Act, and of the several matters for which such sums of money shall have been received or expended, and, in case of united parishes, distinguishing therein the parishes from and in respect of which the same were received and expended, and shall enter in a book, to be provided for the purposes of this Act, minutes of all orders and directions received from the said Committee of Council, and of all acts and proceedings of such Educational Committee in relation to the execution of this Act; and such book shall at all seasonable times be open to the inspection of every inhabitant, and of every person having a child at any school subject to such inspection by Inspectors of Schools in such parish, without any fee or gratuity whatsoever.

Educational Committee to keep accounts and minutes of proceedings.

XII. And be it enacted, That every Educational Committee shall, within days after the in every year, cause to be prepared an abstract of their receipt

Educational Committee to send yearly abstracts

of accounts and minutes to the Committee of Council.

and expenditure, for the purposes of this Act, for the year ending on the , and of such other particulars as the Committee of Council on Education may require; and such abstract, so prepared, shall be signed by the clerk or other officer of such Educational Committee, and shall be forthwith transmitted to the said Committee of Council.

If no educational Committee elected, or no plan proposed, the Committee of Council to establish schools.

XIII. And be it enacted, That in case no Educational Committee as aforesaid shall be elected in any parish, in pursuance of the direction of the said Committee of Council, or if no such plan as aforesaid shall be proposed by such Educational Committee, or, being proposed, shall not obtain the sanction and approval of the said Committee of Council, it shall be lawful for the said Committee of Council to undertake to supply the deficiency of provision for secular education by the establishment of a free school or schools under this Act, and to exercise the powers hereby given to the Educational Committee of such parish.

Committee of Council to report on the progress of education.

XIV. And be it enacted, That the Committee of Council on Education shall make yearly a full report upon the state and progress of education in England and Wales, and shall transmit such report to one of her Majesty's principal Secretaries of State, to be by him laid before Parliament.

Act may be amended or repealed.

XV. And be it enacted, That this Act may be amended or repealed by any Act to be passed in this present session of Parliament.

THE TRUE SPIRIT OF REFORM.

A Speech delivered March 10, 1851, *at the London Tavern, Bishopsgate Street, at a Monthly Soirée of the National Reform Association; Sir Joshua Walmsley, M.P., President of the Association, in the Chair.*

MR. CHAIRMAN, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—When the plan of these meetings was first mentioned to me, I at once declared my concurrence with it, and my readiness to co-operate therein. It cannot but be interesting and useful to have brought before the public, at these monthly assemblages, the various branches of the great Reform question, and the different phases of that question, considered in its generality. They will be placed before you by variety of talent, animated by uniformity of principle and of purpose. Not that we anticipate that much novelty, of either argument or illustration, can now be adduced upon the subject—long-standing grievances necessarily lead to monotony of complaint—but you will have elicited the different views, arising from the contemplation of various intellects; and those who are still in a state of ignorance or indifference may be thus made better acquainted with the subject; while those who already feel its importance, and appreciate its victories, will encourage one another to perseverance and energy in the great struggle that is before us.

The complaint of sameness in the speeches on these occasions we must confess to be, to a considerable extent, well founded. The *Times* will probably say of this meeting, as it said of our annual meeting in this place, that it was "the usual thing." Well, sir, when people were beaten, it was "the usual thing" to cry "Oh!" before the flood, and has been so ever since. Continuity of wrong produces continuity and identity of remonstrance; but when meetings like this—so numerous, so respectable, so enthusiastic—when such meetings become "the usual thing," for success to be long delayed will be very unusual indeed. Our oppo-

nents tell us that they uphold ancient institutions. Granted; but then we uphold an ancient protest against the imperfections or the abuses of those institutions, and our antiquity is at least as honourable as theirs.

All great principles, when first brought into practice, are imperfectly understood and partially applied. This holds in all the departments of human exertion. It is true in mechanism. A new power, like steam, at first is undervalued, misdirected, and its power wasted; and it is long before it takes its proper place as the great spring of so much useful operation in the mechanical arts. It is the same in the political world. Representation—that great, that glorious principle—representation, the characteristic of the modern world, unknown in the ancient—which belongs to our forms of government of these later days, which is associated with the civilisation of the modern world—where is the wonder if, when representation was first recognised as a principle of government, it was applied only very partially, and its purpose, essence, and spirit were far from being understood, even if there had been a disposition properly to appreciate and fully to apply them? Simon de Montfort little knew what he was doing, if he it was who first called the Commons of England to assemble; he thought probably only of a temporary expedient, looked no further than the first patrons—the first regal patrons—of the Commons did—which was, as to how they could get the most money out of their loving, paying subjects. But, sir, the principle was introduced; it began to make its way in people's minds; and from that time to this there has been a continuous struggle to correct its abuses and to extend its influence. The history of representation is also the history of an endeavour for reform and the extension of representation; because that principle—an essential portion of our constitution—has its full development in the future, and not in the past. Accordingly we find, sir, that from age to age there has been this conflict going on. There have been the unrepresented, the partially represented, and there have been defects which pressed heavily and grievously on some one or other portion of the community.

Abuses—and detected imperfections, which are as bad—abuses are contemporaneous with the history of parlia-

ments: they came together as life and death came together into the world; their antagonism remains to this day, but with a succession of triumphs which will bring us nearer and still nearer to what the philosopher conceives of representation, and to what it is the advantage of the multitude to realise in representation. Why, sir, as far back as the reign of Edward III. it was demanded, and the demand was conceded, that parliaments should be annual, or oftener, if need be. In the time of Henry VII. we find that abuses had crept into the exercise of the elective franchise, and that elections were disturbed by tumultuous crowds, and restriction was founded on this abuse,—it would have been better to make an extension of the qualification than to exclude parties,—but a restriction was founded upon these abuses, which was the origin of that valuable franchise, the forty-shilling county freeholds. Well, sir, soon after this, in the reign of the tyrannical Henry VIII., when Wales became formally incorporated with this country, representation was conferred, as a matter of course, upon some sort of instinctive understanding that taxation and representation must go together. When parliaments were intermitted by the first Charles, the Triennial Act of that day was passed, forbidding the monarch to be more than three years without calling parliaments. Cromwell had his bill for the amendment of the representation, and in that it is a remarkable circumstance that members were assigned to Manchester nearly two centuries before a parliament of a later date conceded that privilege, even to so important a town. Well, sir, at the time of William III., it is on record that, in one instance at least, the ballot was in use, in the borough of Lymington in Hampshire, and that it was found there most serviceable in keeping people from being corrupted or intimidated. Then, sir, at the beginning of the last century, the Protestant Whigs of that day prolonged the parliament from three years to seven. This gave rise to a succession of conflicts; which shows that the cause of parliamentary reform, whether provoked by new aggressions or old abuses, has been continuous in this country. From the time of the first Stuart rebellion, in 1715, till the time of the French Revolution, there was an almost continuous parliamentary conflict against the Septennial Act. Its repeal was moved in 1742, and was defeated

by 204 to 184. Moved again in 1744—when the motion was not for a return to triennial parliaments, but for annual parliaments—and negatived by 145 to 118. Again in 1747, again in 1759, again in 1771, again in 1773, there were debates and divisions on this question: and then came the French Revolution, which swamped topics of this kind for a long course of years, which alarmed all the prelatical and aristocratical world,—alarmed them for the cause of the altar and the throne; that is to say, the tithes and the taxes. There was, sir, against this Septennial Act, a protest, which is one of the bright spots in the history of the House of Lords, and which contains sentiments which ought never to be forgotten, nor be remembered without honour to those by whom they were inscribed on the journals of that House. Twenty-four peers protested against the third reading of the Septennial Bill, because frequent parliaments were of the fundamental constitution of this kingdom; because the House of Commons ought to be chosen by the people, and when continued for a longer time than they were chosen for, they were then chosen by the parliament, and not by the people. They conceived that the bill, so far from preventing corruption, was rather increasing it; for the longer parliament was to last, the more valuable to corruptors would be the purchase; and that all the reasons which had been given for long parliaments would be good for making them perpetual, which would be an absolute subversion of the third estate. Such, sir, was the protest of these peers; amply justified at once, for the price of boroughs immediately rose fifty per cent in the market, and it went on increasing until it was checked by the Reform Bill, when a different mode of sale of votes and of conscience was introduced.

Well, sir, succeeding, then, to these principles and to this contest, can we for an instant allow that they are settled by the Reform Bill?—that it is to be taken as any thing like a final adjudication of this great question? We demur to this, because the Reform Bill is not what at the outset it professed to be. As that Bill first came before the House of Commons, whenever a constituency fell below three hundred voters, the neighbouring parishes and districts were to be called on to wipe away so foul a blot upon the very notion of representation as constituencies of three

hundred householders. By the Reform Bill, as it first stood, the length of the duration of parliaments, and the question of security—that is, safe and unbiassed voting—these were left open questions. Every body understood that they were to be adjudicated at a future time, and under other circumstances; and it was not presumed for a long time that these were to be precluded from discussion or adoption, but they were still looked upon as a material part of that course of legislation on which we had entered. Now, sir, ten or fifteen years before the Reform Act was passed, Lord John Russell declared, in his place in the House of Commons, that there were a million of persons in this country fitted to exercise the franchise, and not possessed of it. Did the bill enfranchise that million? Why, we have scarcely more than a million of voters now, with all the increase of knowledge which has taken place since that time, with the schools that have been multiplied, with the institutes, colleges, and various provisions for the growth of the people in attainments, and in fitness for the exercise of the franchise. There must now, then, according to that classification, be an accumulation of persons well qualified, but still excluded; which more accords with Mr. Hume's calculation than with the present views of my Lord John Russell. Now, sir, the notion of the Reform Bill being a final settlement seems something like given up in those quarters from which resistance has been so long experienced. We are to have, it seems, "when the proper time shall come,"—and I think something has happened since that answer was given to hasten the period,—we are, I say, to have some new persons, or new class, admitted within the boundaries of the constitution; but still there are evident indications that it will be on the principle, and in the spirit, of the existing Reform Act, and not on that broad principle and more generous spirit which characterise the plans of reform supported by this Association.

Now, sir, the Reform Bill has sometimes been called a "compact." The Conservatives are in the habit of saying, "You gave the Reform Bill, we accepted it, and there is an end of the matter." But they did not accept it without damaging it by their Chandos clause, which admits a dependent class in large numbers, whilst it keeps out inde-

pendent persons in yet larger numbers. But even if the Whigs can rightly say they did give it, and if the Tories can affirm, "We accepted it," still, I say, what is that to us, the people of England? Who gave them authority to barter between them our rights and liberties? The freedom of Englishmen is not a thing to be given by Whigs, or to be withheld or accepted by Tories. Nor was the Reform Bill a compact between the Whigs and the people. They were, indeed, supported by the people; and where would they have been had that not been the case? But did they give the people the Reform Bill, after all? Where were they when King William IV. flung Lord Grey, by refusing to create peers? Why, there was an end of the Whig power; there was an end of their promise to the people, that if they would only keep quiet, Government would do it all for them. They tried their strength, and they failed; and it was the great popular demonstration, from John o' Groat's to the Land's End—it was the magnificent attitude, so calm and so resolute, assumed by the people of England on that occasion—that made even the heart of "the Iron Duke" to quail within him, that told him he might have been the victor in a hundred battles, but that he was not destined to be a victor over the will of the people of England. The Whigs gave us the Reform Bill? It was we that gave the Whigs the Reform Bill. And how did we do that? By a greater extent of heart-felt union among the different classes of people in this country—of the different ranks of society, of the different sets of politicians—than had ever before been evinced. We did it by the union of those who were content with septennial parliaments, and with the franchise then provided—those who wished for triennial and those who wished for annual parliaments—all classes of politicians combined in carrying the Reform Bill. And, sir, they did it, I think, with a clear understanding. The great mass of the working people of this country saw that the bill would not enfranchise them, that the suffrage it gave would stop with the middle classes, and that they themselves would still be excluded; yet, with a generosity and nobleness of spirit which did them honour, they waived their own rights, and they helped the middle classes to gain their freedom; and shame on the middle classes of this country if that union is ever for-

gotten! I say, sir, that was a pledge—an implied pledge, and a sacred one—on the part of the middle classes of this country, that whenever the opportunity should serve, the power being in their hands, they would again unite with the working classes throughout the kingdom, and would coöperate with them in an attempt to gain that for the excluded party which had already been gained for those who were included in this extension of the suffrage.

Now, I take Mr. Hume's motion to be an attempt to fulfil this pledge. I will not say—I never have said on any occasion whatever—that that motion perfectly comes up to what the inherent right of the people requires; but I do say that it combines a larger number of supporters than any other plan can or will combine. I say that the difference between it and the more consistent theory is practically so small, that while the chance of getting the one is greater than getting the other, I think we should go for this; for although it may leave half a million unenfranchised who ought to possess the franchise, yet it will add to the constituency something like three millions of voters; and what power will stand against their influence then? I rejoice to see the way in which this measure is taken. I know not whether the meeting generally has seen the resolutions passed by that great body of Chartists in the north who hold their public meetings in Manchester. They are an admirable set of resolutions. I will not occupy your time by reading all of them; but there are two or three which I wish to bring before the notice of the meeting, because they realise the subject I undertook to discuss in this address,—they exhibit practically the True Spirit of Reform. The third of these resolutions runs thus: "That many years of bitter experience have taught us the necessity of the friendly union and coöperation of all sections of political reformers; that such a union would be so powerful in its features that nothing could withstand it; that the present political crisis is a great opportunity for a union being brought about, and to accomplish its ends. We therefore resolve to assist and give the right hand of fellowship to all men who are essaying to gain any measure of reform that shall elevate the down-trodden masses of our countrymen." The next resolution goes on to say: "That we receive with satisfaction the address recently put forth by

the National Parliamentary and Financial Reform Association, signed by Sir Joshua Walmsley, and we hereby tender them our heartfelt thanks and support; believing that in so doing we seek to further the principles of our Charter, and shorten the way to the enfranchisement of the industrious millions." Let these resolutions be met, sir, by a corresponding spirit. From one end of this country to the other, let us have an end of this line of demarcation between those who may go different lengths, but who have a common object—the rendering of this a self-governed nation — and I think that such a union will yield a far greater measure of reform, and that speedily, than my Lord John Russell is, as I understand, contemplating.

I cannot, however, omit all notice of the theory which that noble lord still holds, and which was with some formality propounded on a late occasion. It may be well to see exactly wherein we differ. He allows that it is desirable to place the representation on a wider basis, and give an interest to a greater number of the subjects of the Queen in maintaining our institutions. Why not in "improving" our institutions, as well as "maintaining" them? But, he says, "I cannot conceive that a House of Commons, merely representing numbers, would act in harmony with the monarchy, a hereditary House of Lords, and an Established Church." Then why cannot my Lord John Russell conceive that? Does he think that these institutions are not good enough to commend themselves to people of common sense? Does he mean to make this very imperfection a reason for withholding their rights from those who, as he apprehends, may entertain a different opinion upon this subject? Why, sir, where is the old Whig toast and doctrine of "The Sovereignty of the People"? What is an Established Church, what the House of Lords, what Royalty itself, according to the old Whig doctrine, but emanations from "the sovereignty of the people," existing for and by the people alone? Sir, I say the people have a right, if they please, to deal with all these. Assuredly they have the right to deal with an Established Church, which is only a creature of the State; whose Prayer-book is the long schedule of an Act of Parliament, passed in the reign of Charles II.; which repeatedly boasts of its

connection with the State, and thereby avows its own subjugated condition. Assuredly it is in the power of the people to decide whether wisdom be or be not hereditary, and whether so large a portion of it does descend from father to son as to make that mode of legislation desirable. Not that there is any particular outcry about the House of Lords at this time; nor much, indeed, about the Established Church: the outcry is rather by the Established Church against the aggression of a non-established Church. But still we declare the people have a right to deal with these matters. As to Royalty itself,—and there, sir, Lord John Russell had little occasion to make this remark at such a time, for when has there been less discontent in the country as to the character or conduct of the sovereign? Never. I am old enough to remember three sovereigns before this, and all the popularity that each of them had put together, and multiplied twentyfold, would not amount to the popularity enjoyed by Queen Victoria. If there be any imputation implied here, and it looks somewhat like it, I say that imputation is a calumny upon the people of this country; but I say that if royalty should, in the course of years, show itself inconsistent with the well-being of the country,—if it should forfeit its claims to immunity, by invading the liberties of the subject,—if it should cease to fulfil the benefit, whatever that may be, for which its existence is cheerfully recognised by the people,—then the people have a right to deal with that as with other institutions. We do not hold the monstrous faith of millions made for one; we are not the born property of hereditary possessors; we have monarchy as an institution with which we are content, but which, should we not prove content with it, we have a right to abolish.

Lord John Russell thinks it should be the object of every man who approaches the subject not to create a House of Commons which should be a separate and independent power, jarring with all our institutions. Well, then, he would have it a dependent power, not jarring with our other institutions,—Lords, or Established Church, or whatever they may be. This is not desiring the enfranchisement of the people; this is a plan for giving them votes, provided there is full security they will use those votes just in the particular way, and no other, in which it

is desired by the parliamentary donors. Sir, the very object of a man's possessing a substantive existence in the State, of being enfranchised, is this,—that he may exercise an independent judgment, and that his representatives may be as independent as he is when truth and justice require it, and not carefully to keep himself in conformity to our "other institutions." I shall be glad, however, to find the noble lord doing any thing. I am not for rejecting the smallest measure of reform, and I am very glad he has found out his blunder about finality. He came to that opinion much too soon. In fact, the Whigs in this reform labour have reversed the plan which in a late report of a factory inspector it was stated that some mill-owner in the north adopted with his workpeople. He had them rung in in the morning by the engineer, and rung out at night by the fireman. The engineer had a watch which was a quarter of an hour too fast, and the fireman had a watch which was a quarter of an hour too slow; so that the labour of the people was prolonged at both ends. But Lord John Russell and the Whigs begin their reform work by the slow watch, and end it by the quick watch.

Sir, in directing attention to the true spirit of reform, I assume that a great and noble cause like ours should be upheld by its supporters in a spirit that corresponds with its dignity and its nobleness. I want to see no vile party tactics, no unmeaning clamour, no tricks such as are resorted to to carry some measure of the day. Ours is not a measure of that description. We have a past. Mr. D'Israeli has sometimes boasted for his party that, although crippled now, they have been a great party; that they have done things recorded in history; that they have their traditions. Sir, we have our traditions. Faintly and hastily I have sketched the progress of reform from the very beginning of representative government, and its coördinate progress with that of representation. We have our past in the history of our country; those by whom reforms were conceived, and by whom they were won, and by whom a portion of them were established. We have our alliances with great names in the history of our country; men who in philosophical retirement, like Sir Thomas More, have conceived in their Utopias of a more prosperous state of society;—they have

early been of our principles—the Miltons, and the Lockes, and others, shedding a brighter lustre upon our country than all the deeds of its warriors, or even its statesmen;—they pleaded with their gigantic powers in this same cause of reform. Ours were the warriors of the Commonwealth, and ours were the martyrs of the Restoration. From that time to this there has been a succession of men, belonging in later periods to the humbler classes, but showing an intelligence and integrity worthy of any period; a cause containing such names as that of Thomas Hardy and the men of 1794; they perilled prospects, liberty, and life in this cause: and these in long succession have handed it down to us. We have to support it worthily. Here is something greater than physical, hereditary descent; here is generation after generation: heirs each of the spirit of those who went before, following them in struggles the most arduous, enduring privations after their high example, endeavouring to apply their success, and to realise what to them were only the blissful visions of futurity in their imaginations.

Sir, we have our past and our future too. They are connected. We have been called "destructives." It is a thorough misunderstanding, if it be not a wilful untruth. All that we desire has its foundation, or its root, in the past. There is not a thing, even technically, for which we have not precedent. Men in this country have had annual parliaments, they have voted by ballot, they have had, by implication, the suffrage. Lord John Russell himself, in one of his early reform speeches, stated that every householder in a borough had formerly a right to vote for members of parliament. We only ask that of which the indications are evident in the past; we ask them freely developed and applied to the intelligence and the condition of the present generation. We allow no slavery now; and we demand, then, for all, if slavery has ceased, the rights which were claimed for freemen as far back even as the tyrant John. If the Charter, as we have often been told, did not benefit the serf, why, when serfdom ceased, the benefit ought to have been coextensive with human existence. The term "slave class" has often been objected to by certain parties, but what else is a man who, in a government carried on by representation, has no share in the

election of a representative? Sir, our future—it may be through a long perspective, but it is grand and glorious—it is that of growing intelligence with extended right; it is that of the fusion of classes, the swamping of class interest in the great common interest; it is that of men "who know their rights, and, knowing, dare maintain;" it is that of a self-governed nation, clearly apprehensive of its own greatest and best interests, and in whose hands, therefore, those interests are safe against either internal oppression or foreign invasion. And in our way to that consummation are many good things to be enjoyed: the lightening of the burdens of taxation; a more equitable adjustment of them; the pressure removed from the springs of industry; a feeling of fraternity, taking the place of the rivalry of mutually anathematising Churches; and eventually talent—talent and character—filling their proper places in the world, and as adapted for political organisation and arrangement being in the seats of power, however lowly the situation in which their possessor may have been born.

Why, sir, how far we are off this! The other day, the leader of a free-trade ministry being virtually out of office, to whom does he betake himself? Why, he advises her Majesty to send for my Lord Stanley; he knowing and declaring that Lord Stanley's ministry would be a great wrong to this country, an injustice too bad to be borne, and that it would be rectified, not by parliament, where the people have no sufficient voice, but that it would produce confusion throughout the country, and plunge society into the most horrible calamities; yet, seeing all this, he advises her Majesty to send for Lord Stanley! Why? Because he himself is the leader of one party of the aristocracy, and Lord Stanley is the leader of the antagonistic party. Lord Stanley had not beaten him; he was not put in a minority by Lord Stanley's party in the House of Commons. He had been put in a minority,—true! but it was by the members of the people's party. Why, sir, I could better understand, according to the etiquette of such matters, that he should have advised her Majesty to send for Mr. Locke King and Mr. Hume, than that he should have advised Lord Stanley to be sent for. But this is the result of letting the nation or government be placed in the hands of certain families. There is a little knot of

families called "Whigs," and another little knot of families called "Tories;" they take the government by turns, and when one of them gets into a hobble, then the other is called in, and has its turn in the distribution of the good things of government and of corruption.

Sir, I say to this National Reform Association,—pursue your object in an intelligent, decided, and high-minded manner. Let there be a moral feeling amongst you, which will make a man as willing to confess that he has put his hand into other people's pockets as that he has taken a bribe to bias him in his vote. Let such people feel that they are as felons in the class to which they belong. Let them know that you will not tolerate the various forms of bribery, and those absurd and beastly indulgences to which they were so addicted, and in which those who make themselves the agents of corruption in the land are in the habit of working. Why, sir, the accounts of the recent election for the Falkirk Burghs is enough almost to make one blush for one's nature! We are told there that the voters were in such a state of beastly intoxication, that they were lying about the paths in all directions; that you were not safe in driving a carriage, lest you should drive over them; that some were with their heads in the hedge, and others with their feet in the hedge; that they were scattered almost in all sorts of ways, from which humanity turns sickening and revolting. Is this to be endured? Is it to be endured that the common plan of canvassing and coercing the conscience should be persevered in? I say to the members of this Association—and I would say it if my voice would reach its members throughout the country—set your faces sternly against this; no matter whether Whig or Tory, or whoever may be the candidate that resorts to such means; they are not the parties to deal wisely, fairly, and truthfully by you, when they have accomplished the object of their ambition.

We need the protection of the ballot from scenes of this kind. I am not an advocate for the ballot in itself. I say it is a painful and degrading thought, that secrecy should be necessary in the exercise of the proudest duty of a citizen; but so long as the great and influential classes persist in corrupting the people,—so long as they persist also in intimidating the people,—I say protection is the

right of every man who might suffer in his circumstances as no one should be compelled to suffer. I venerate the martyr who braves all this; but I would take away the power of inflicting martyrdom throughout the country. Why, what a position it is! I remember the story of a brewer, in the time of one of Sir Francis Burdett's elections for Westminster. The brewer served the king; and it is said that he had had a hint from a high quarter as to his vote at the election. The poor man said: "What am I to do? if I vote for Sir Francis Burdett, I shall brew no more for the king; and if I do not vote for Sir Francis Burdett, I shall brew no more for any body else." Well, sir, something like that is the condition to which tens of thousands of the tradesmen of this country are reduced whenever an election comes round. The law should throw over them the broad shield of its protection by secrecy; and I think the result would be, that, in the course of a single generation, that dull body to learn—the aristocracy of the country—would at length be taught the lesson, that it had no more to do with how a tenant or a tradesman voted, than it had with whom he married, or how he said his prayers.

Pursue reform in the spirit of independence, avoiding all abuse and low party tactics. Remember that it is an intellectual subject; understand its bearings; be ready to give a reason for it. Have something more to say than what the *Times* calls it,—that it is "the usual thing." Let it be usual with you to show how and why you desire it; that you look to the influence of the people, and to the protection of their interests. You look not merely to economy and saving, you look to the prosperity as well as the freedom of your country. It may be a long work yet for some of us: perhaps, for some of us at least, it will be a life-long work. It is worthy of it. Many have lived for it,—some have died for it. We follow them in this course; and by a stern frown on every dereliction of principle, by a spirit of union and kindness in the various classes of society thus harmoniously combined, by abstaining from all absurd threats of violence—it is not violence that can ever serve the cause of reform—let us show ourselves worthy successors of the great men who have gone before in this cause,—of the multitude who before

have nobly striven in this cause. It is the greatest and the best cause for which we can engage in political action; and if you show that you deserve to be victorious, that desert will hasten, aggrandise, and render more beneficial the moment of victory.

[The other speakers at this meeting were the President, T. J. Serle, Esq., Charles Gilpin, Esq., John Thwaites, Esq., R. H. Kennedy, Esq., and H. J. Slack, Esq.]

THREE SPEECHES

Delivered at Meetings held to congratulate Mr. Fox on his return a second time as M.P. for Oldham.

[At the first of these Meetings, held at Oldham on February 4, 1853, a crimson velvet purse, containing 112 sovereigns,—the number of the majority by which he was returned,—was presented to Mr. Fox by the ladies of Oldham, together with a signet-ring, bearing the inscription: "Education the birthright of all." At the second meeting, held also at Oldham on February 7, 1853, a silver ink-stand and gold pen were presented, the former bearing the inscription: "Presented to W. J. Fox, Esq., M.P. for Oldham, by a few of the non-electors of that borough, for his able and zealous advocacy of their political rights, and their moral and intellectual elevation." And at the third meeting, held at Royton on February 12, 1853, a silver medal was presented, bearing on one side the inscription: "Presented to W. J. Fox, Esq., M.P., as a token of respect, by a number of boys belonging to the borough of Oldham;" and on the other: "Free Trade and Religious Liberty."]

No. I.

SPEECH AT OLDHAM.

February 4th, 1853.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—Words are wanting to me to express the emotions with which I receive this handsome and substantial memorial, so gracefully and beautifully presented by the lady deputed for that purpose. I cannot but feel that this is, indeed, the proudest tribute which a political man can possibly receive. I feel it to be the noblest recognition of whatever I may have done in the field of politics, for this reason, that when woman's heart is touched by political movements, when woman's moral sense accords with the exertions of man in the storms of public life, you may be sure there is something more in it than a mere party question,—something more than a mere

struggle for power. There is in it that which appeals to the commonest and purest principles of our nature; there is something which tends to the edification and elevation of humanity. It is on this account I feel so strongly this testimony from the mothers and daughters, from the wives and sisters, of the electors and non-electors of the borough of Oldham. I feel it more from them than from their husbands, sons, and fathers, because I regard woman as the conscience of politics, its moral sense, that which argues its refinement and its exaltation; that which marks it morally as well as politically, and indicates to us the path which, with our rougher means and in our rougher way, we should endeavour to trace. Some will say, even in this day, as it has often been said before, and may still, perhaps, be said in some dark corners of the country,—some will say that woman has nothing to do with politics. Why, if woman has nothing to do with politics, an honest man ought to have nothing to do with politics. They have to do with politics. They keep us pure, simple, just, earnest in our exertions in politics and public life. They have to do with it, because, whilst the portion of man may be, by the rougher labour of the head and hands, to work out many of the great results of life, the peculiar function of woman is to spread grace and softness, truth, beauty, benignity, over all. Nor is woman confined to this sort of influence; in fact, I wish that her direct, as well as her indirect, influence were still larger than it is in the sphere of politics. Why, we trust a woman with the sceptre of this realm; and, adequate to making peers in the State, and bishops in the Church, surely she must be adequate to sending her representative to the lower House. I know the time may not be come yet for mooting a question of this sort; but I know, also, that the time will come, and that the time must come, and that woman will be something more than a mere adjective to man in political matters. She will become a substantive also; and why not? If she chooses, every woman who holds stock in the East-India Company shares in the election of the directors of the East-India House, who elect those who govern our vast Indian empire. Any woman who holds East-India stock nominates those who nominate the rulers of our mighty oriental territory. In many of our large parochial matters—in the parish of Mary-

lebone, itself as large as a county, and with its array of numbers and property—women who are householders vote, and vote by a mode analogous to that of the ballot. There is a list of the candidates left at their residences, and they strike out those names of which they disapprove, and leave in the names of those of whom they approve; and thus they exercise their influence on the general result of parochial management. Then in Lower Canada women vote for representatives. All those who inherit certain freeholds, by a traditionary custom from their forefathers, exercise the elective franchise there, and no complaint that I know of has ever been made of its being abused.

However, I speak not of such a thing as of immediate and pressing urgency in this country, but as that which I am not ashamed or afraid to look forward to. This is a matter we ought not to blink, as a matter of principle, as something which will come in this country, if it is to be a free country, and if the laws which affect all are to be assented to by all. Women have not been wanting in the most arduous and stirring times; they have not been wanting in whatever could mitigate the sufferings and stimulate the exertions of those who were engaged in arduous conflict.

Many years ago, I was acquainted with William Hone, who fought the battle of the freedom of the press with the government and the aristocracy, and with courts of justice—a man who was tried for many long hours, on three successive days, on different indictments. First, by Chief-Justice Abbot, who was then pushed aside by Lord Ellenborough, who as much as said to him, "You do not know how to convict a radical—I do; let me come on to the bench;" but Hone obtained the verdict of three juries. What was the position of my poor friend? When this array was before him, his heart sank within him; some thoughts of his wife and ten children crossed his mind; he thought of the future with the present; all the perils of political martyrdom arose in his sight, and he said, "It must not be. I shall not stay: I will estreat my bail, and be off to America;" and his wife said, "You have braved them thus far; you have challenged those powers; you have dared them to the conflict; do not leave your children the disgrace of knowing that you shrank from it when the moment of trial came."

Inspirited by her, he went on and succeeded; and so will man succeed when woman points the path of duty, and urges him to the conflict, however arduous that conflict may be.

When English arms were victorious in France, the fair Maid of Arc redeemed her country; and when the French overran Spain, the Maid of Saragossa aggrandised even the antique bravery of the Spanish nation. Women are capable of deeds like those; and, if it be considered that their general sphere should be confined to the discharge of household duties, it is as the genii of our hearts and of our homes, and not as drudges, that we should there regard them; and woe be to the man who dares not carry his politics to his own hearth and fireside, and tell his wife his feelings, his principles, his motives, claim the sympathy of woman in the exertions of man, and so give them consecration and an earnest of the Divine sanction. They are the pledge of the success of every great and good cause. I remember when the anti-Corn-Law agitation had gone on for several years, there came a great movement of the women in its favour; there were gatherings in different parts of the country, and Mr. Cobden exclaimed with delight on the occasion, "We shall win now the women are for us." So I say of Reform, we shall win when the women show themselves in favour of it. So I say of the conflict which is yet to come; and why? It has been so since the world began. What great work has been accomplished without woman's aid? Would the emancipation of the slave have been accomplished had it not been for the impulse of strength and encouragement from their sympathy? We may go back to the origin of our religion. Who in the New-Testament record appear as the most earnest supporters of the great Founder of Christianity and of their leader and Saviour? We find women following, ministering to his wants and necessities, and sympathising in his sorrow. We never find them among the brutal multitude, shouting "Crucify him!" but wherever the success of that pure system of religion was to be promoted, they were the last at the cross and the first at the sepulchre in every place; and thus they gave Christianity their evidence that it is in accordance with the best and purest sympathies of human nature.

I would say, if our spheres are different, they yet harmonise. I would say to man and woman, in political movements, as an elegant poetess, Mrs. Barbauld, said to the scholars of Eton College, imagining their future destiny in the service of the country:

> "Their different powers in different spheres displayed,
> Like blended harmony of light and shade,
> With friendly union in one mass shall blend,
> And those adorn the cause, and these defend."

But my thanks are due not only to them, but to others whom I see congregated before me; and I can truly say, of all the meetings I have ever faced—and they must have been many—this is the one which most embarrasses and impairs my powers of utterance. I have faced meetings like this, of majestic numbers; I have faced meetings acute and critical, where every word and sentence was liable to be analysed, and, if there were a flaw in it, detected and scoffed at. I have faced meetings uproarious and hostile, where a hearing was scarcely to be obtained, if it were to be obtained at all. But not in any one or all of those did I find associations so overwhelming as present themselves to my mind at this moment. It is not merely that a great host of friendly beings, by the accumulation, as it were, of their kindness, overpower the feelings, but it is the associated recollections which they awaken, that crowd on the mind; it is the thought that you, electors and non-electors, by arduous struggles, by great sacrifices on your part, by much influence, by opposing reason to violence and justice to calumny,—that you have, at the peril of person and of property, in the most noble and most magnanimous manner, placed me in a position to which my thoughts, some time ago, never could have possibly looked. You have placed the "Norwich Weaver-boy" in the Senate of the British empire; and you have done so from no influence of wealth, of station, of connection. Why, there have been, and there are, other honourable instances of men who, like myself, bred amongst the labouring classes, have taken their places in that assembly; but there is this difference between my case and theirs. They have made their way by successful industry; they have accumulated wealth; they have acquired station and influence by their wealth; and on this basis

they have erected the fabric of their ambition. I have never done this; I have never sought to do this. I came amongst you with no such influences: I have them not. There was only to recommend me the simple fervency of my nature in the cause of the classes in which I was born and bred, and to the elevation of which my efforts have been uniformly directed.

There has been a paragraph lately going the round of the papers, headed a "Liberal Constituency," stating that the electors of Wolverhampton returned Mr. Villiers free of expense. This may be new to some; but there is nothing new in it to you at Oldham; it is a familiar thing. It is not what you consider liberality, but justice. It is what you have done again and again, and it gives me the right to boast—a right which few share with me in the House of Commons—that I have practised nothing unjust to bring me there, or used other means than the fair exercise of my energies; and when I was once asked, was there any bribery in Oldham, I answered, "Yes, there was one instance, and only one, that came to my knowledge; and that was, that the noble and generous people of Oldham bribed me to be their representative."

I said that recollections were crowding on my mind as I stood here, and there continue to crowd on it recollections of different kinds. And with the memory and with the thoughts of active and living services, I cannot stand on this platform without the memory of the services of the dead. I cannot stand on this platform without remembering what passed here not very long ago,—that solemn, that impressive scene which I have no doubt recurs to your mind, without adverting to it more this evening. At a distance I felt a feeling of regret when the news of that occurrence reached me; for, as regards Mr. Holliday, I was with him in a peculiar position. When I first appeared here in 1846, he and I stood on the same platform in your town hall. We stood there as opponents. He was then the candidate for your suffrage. I found him a frank, truthful, generous opponent. I had to complain to him of no misstatement, of no calumny, of nothing ungenerous, of nothing that could excite any other feeling than that of respect. As the course of events proceeded, he withdrew his pretensions; and as I had found him a frank and truth-

ful and generous opponent, I then found him a frank, truthful, and generous supporter. He acted cordially in the struggle of that first election in 1847; he became subsequently my proposer on the hustings at the nomination day; and, in the recent struggle, you all know how keen was his interest, how valuable his exertions. And in that last impressive scene, he closed his life, though most unexpectedly, yet most worthily and honourably, in enforcing, especially on young men, a regard for principle above all things; the temperate, the reasonable, and persevering pursuit of the true and the good. And may the lessons that he taught that day, with his dying breath, be impressed on their minds clearly, that the future may give value to their characters, and brightness to their eternal hope! May each learn from his memory, whatever his politics or opinions, whatever his position, that as he was successful in his industry, sincere in his piety, patriotic in his politics, the moral of his life and death is one which, though trite and familiar in its terms, should yet be inscribed on every mind and heart, that

"An honest man's the noblest work of God."

And now I feel that physical infirmity will scarcely permit me to thank you as largely and fervently as I would. But let me glance at the general condition of the country. I am happy we meet in times of prosperity, in times made so by the exertions eminently of one who is with us on this platform, and in a large degree by many of you present. There is an end to all controversy now about free trade, because those who doubted, doubt no longer; those who denied it, deny it no longer. In fact, they charge their opponents with not going on fast enough; and, as the late Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his budget speech: "They say protection is dead. Not so; it is alive on the bench opposite;—they have taken up our prejudices, when we have laid them down." Well, I am glad to find they have laid them down, whoever may take them up. But the influence on the prices of food, on the imports of various articles into the kingdom—on trade, on exports, on the shipping interest, and all interests,—the results are conspicuous; there can be but one voice and one feeling now on the matter.

Nor is this the only cause of congratulation. The government of the country is now in hands which, whatever suspicion there may be about some questions, I think may be regarded as safe hands for free trade,—at least, as much safer hands for free trade than those from which they have taken the reins of government. We have, I think, seen the end of the last Tory ministry that this country will ever know. They have added to a curious fact with regard to many Tory ministries that preceded them. You find that every Tory government coming into power sees itself behind the public opinion on some point or other—so much so, that it must make concessions. The history of Tory administrations is like a record of milestones which shows how the world goes on, and those who endeavour to stand still only serve to record its progress. From 1790, for a period of forty years, Toryism was rampant in this country; and what tricks it played! There are in Oldham and the neighbourhood some old reformers, like myself, who remember the time when the Habeas Corpus Act was permanently suspended, —when men were dragged from their homes and from their beds, and conveyed to prison—nobody knew for what, they themselves least of all—and some even kept there for several years, without any distinct charge being made against them, —when the press was taxed and fettered,—when public meetings were impeded in every possible way,—when oppression went greater lengths than this, and events which I need not relate now, of a sanguinary character, took place, and magistrates were thanked for massacres. This lasted forty years; and then again, in 1827, there was a Tory ministry with George Canning at its head. They did some good service by unloosing this country from the car of the Holy Alliance. They disclaimed that impious bond of kings against people. They said the country should have nothing to do with any such combination or conspiracy, and they recognised the independence of the republics of the New World, in order to correct the balance of the Old. In 1829 there was again a Tory ministry; and what did they do? They liberated the Dissenters from the disgrace of the Test and Corporation Act, and they emancipated the Irish Catholics: not from any good will, avowedly not from conviction; but the public opinion of the country was not to be trifled with on this matter. In 1835

we again had a Tory administration in power, the Peel and Wellington administration. What did they do? They accepted the Reform Act—that Act which they declared would peril the House of Lords, the king's throne, the institutions, and every thing that was sacred and venerable in the country. In 1841 there was another Tory administration—then began fiscal reform, the tariff was amended, and in 1846 a Tory administration repealed the Corn Laws. In 1852 came the last Tory administration, which has pronounced the funeral oration of protection, consigned it to the grave of all the Capulets, which has left this country a legacy which must be administered to in a corrected income tax, in amending the probate duties, and interfering in various ways with the system of class legislation which has hitherto prevailed.

I do not thank Toryism for those things; but they show that its tyranny has been gradually declining every time that it has come into the possession of power,—something swept away from it every time,—until modern Toryism is the merest strip—like the reducing strip of land seen when the tide is rushing in on the edge of the seashore. Why, some time ago it seemed as if the slime, and the seaweed, and the grotesque rocks of the shore, and all the deformity of the beach, were triumphing over the retreating tide. One wave rushing in cuts down a portion; another comes, and overwhelms another part; another takes yet more,—until they come on, and we have arrived at the very last edge of Toryism, and the majestic tide of public opinion rolls triumphant in beauty and grandeur over the whole extent of the kingdom.

On other occasions I have been asked many questions in this place. The last time I was here, oh! how I was questioned for about an hour. I have no catechism to say now. I have given but one vote since I had the honour of being your representative, and that one vote I gave with a sound and safe conscience. It was the vote that helped to unseat the Derby ministry; and I say with the greatest pleasure here, that in this case my vote was not neutralised. I did not vote alone. Oldham was not on that occasion mystified and stultified by votes on both sides. You told for two. In that majority of 19 (no very large majority) Oldham told for two, and I think it was a fair and honour-

able proportion for you to have in that division. Therefore I say, that was a vote which I glory in, because I think that the men then in power, by their unprincipled mode of acting on the public mind,—by the nefarious attempts which they made in elections by bribery and violence all over the country—by open violence in some places, and by filthy W. B.-ism in others; by eating their own words wholesale; by being all things to all men—promising any thing and every thing—shifting the grounds even of the very question on which we were to come to a vote—shifting the grounds every speech that was made, in order that they might bewilder and catch some one or other stray vote;—I say that such men deserved to be turned out. This country is not to be governed by trickery, artifice, and falsehood. We demand fair, straightforward, honest dealing in those with whom we deal in respect to our allegiance.

I say, the budget alone was offence enough. I particularly allude to its most prominent features,—doubling the land-tax and extending the area of the tax, and extending the area of the income-tax. I say this was a policy most unfair to the very same classes, people with incomes from 50*l.* to 150*l.* per annum. They are the people who bear the great mass of indirect taxation, and from whom the largest proportion is taken for the mere necessaries of life; and yet it was on this class that the great burden was to fall. What could be more unequal than this house-tax? Even as it at present exists, how unjust towards the shopkeeper! Where, in England, do you think the highest-rated house in the kingdom was lately to be found? Not in the palaces of princes, not in the large and stately castles surrounded by the demesnes of noblemen. Unfortunately, the most highly taxed house in the kingdom was an hotel in Brighton. The shopkeeper has three or four times as much to pay as the first noble of the country; and, at this very moment, this unequal rating makes the tax bear, as in its nature it must, seriously on the trading and operative classes. There is a special reason for this. A person of independent property chooses his abode; he pitches his tent where he likes. He can take advantage of the salubrity of one country, or the beauty of another, or the conveniences and cheapness of a

third. The shopkeeper must have his premises where his customers "most do congregate." The labouring man must live where he is within reach of the place of his employment. They are both tied and attached to the spot. They cannot move from it. Taxation takes an ungenerous advantage of it, like some filthy mongrel of a dog which worries a poor cow that is tethered within a narrow circle of grass, and that cannot escape his vexatious interference. Why, sir, that was the course pursued by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on this resolution. He looked in many directions for collecting opinions. He did something for the shipowner; he did something for the West-India interest. He intended to make the growers of barley a present of two and a half millions per annum—for the greatest portion of it would have gone into their pockets, and not remained in those of the consumer. He did something for the farmers—remitting, I think, 160,000*l.* out of schedule B. He did something for the clergymen—he purposed to put them on a different footing from other holders of a freehold life interest. He made a circumnavigation of liberality; he seemed to be sailing round the world, touching at every social port and distributing his bounties, until he came to the land of narrow incomes and industrial labour; and there, instead of giving a bonus, he levied a contribution. I say, if it was only for this, they deserved their dismission from power.

As to the men who succeed them, they are upon their trial, and a fair trial they are assuredly entitled to. I trust that free trade is safe in their hands. I do not say quite as much of the question of reform. We shall see what they do mean to produce; but, without insisting on all the points that we deem even of great importance, there are three essentials in any reform scheme which are indispensable to make it worth any thing to those who understand the question. These three essentials are,—a large extension of the franchise; the ballot, or other security, if it can be devised, for safe voting, of which I have no knowledge; and a redistribution of electoral power. These, I say, are all essentials.

There are masses that are well entitled to the suffrage, and that must have it, and it is inevitable they should have it; but what is voting unless it be free voting? How can it be free voting unless they have some protection from the

supervision of those who either use the bludgeon to stop us in our way to the poll, or who say that we shall feel the screw upon our pockets if we dare to vote in opposition to them? Why, they said the ballot would sanction lying. I am very glad to find that the people who say this are so particular about lying. It is, no doubt, a lie when a man tells his master or landlord that he voted one way, and actually voted another; but I can tell you a worse lie than that: it is a still worse lie when a man goes to the poll and says, "I vote for A. B."—knowing in his heart that A. B. is not the properest person to send into the house of legislature. Why, that is a lie, not to his master or his landlord,—it is a lie to his God, his country, and his own conscience; and the operation of this is to spread lying throughout his life. A man is ashamed to say he voted against his opinions; he falsifies his opinions in order to accommodate these to the vote which he was compelled to give; and thus you confer a sort of omnipresence on falsehood; you strike at the very heart and life of truth in the man's own soul and conscience. Then, I say, we must have a redistribution of power. One hundred and fifty thousand electors, out of about a million who are now in the nominal possession of the franchise, return a majority in the present House of Commons. Is this fair?

And what does an extension of the franchise mean, if there be no distribution of representatives in proportion to the population, or, if you like, the population and the property, of the electoral districts? What does it mean? It is simply lowering the value of the franchise. You have now in Oldham about 2000 voters. Well, Mr. Hume's motion, if carried, would give you 16,000 and some odd hundreds. What, then, is your position? Each voter has now the nomination of the two-thousandth part of a member of parliament; you would then have only the sixteen-thousandth part. You would have so much taken from you, if this is to be all,—if there is to be no proportion between the number of electors, or, it may be, the amount of property, of a district, and the number of the representatives. Why, is it not monstrous that the metropolitan boroughs, if you add Manchester to them, return just eighteen members, and yet contain a majority of the present constituency of the country? Is it not monstrous,

that if you sort the counties according to their character, if you take each county with its population, with its property, and with the number of members it sends both for the county and for boroughs within the county,—if you apply this test to all the counties in the country, and then arrange them as they are agricultural counties, like Dorset, and Hampshire, and Essex, and so on; or as they are manufacturing counties, like Lancashire and Yorkshire, and so on,—that the agricultural counties have nearly one hundred more members than by population and property they are entitled to send, while the manufacturing counties have nearly one hundred fewer members than by population and property they are entitled to send. Now, that is the reform I want to see. Distribute political power. There is nothing gained by giving a man who has now 10,000 electors, 15,000 constituents; his is but one vote,—he is altogether in the same position. I want to see that we proportion political power to population and property, and make them tell upon the legislation.

Another point on which I would not trust the present government is, that of education. Lord John Russell and Lord Aberdeen say they are projecting an educational measure on the basis of religion. Now, Heaven forbid that I should, on this occasion or any other, say one word against religion as an element of education, because I should be belying my own views and conscience. I say there can be no education, in the proper, ample, highest sense of the word, without religion. I say that most distinctly. At the same time, I object to a government scheme of education which is what they call founded on religion,—because such a scheme means teaching catechism, not science; because such a scheme means throwing the juvenile population of the country into the hands of the parsons, and not of the philosophers; because it tends to sectarianise the population. There are certain things which I should have thought no one would doubt—and your chairman put this point to you—were important for all. Now I say, it would be desirable if there were places—call them schools, or institutes, or whatever you will—all over the country, where the young might freely learn to read, to write, and to cast accounts; where they might be taught something of the history, geography, and institutions of their country; where

they might get some insight into the elements of some art or science connected with industrial occupations; where they might have inculcated upon them the principles of social morality;—I say it would be a good thing to have such schools, or institutes, call them what you will, accessible in the morning of the day, or accessible in the evening of the day, and freely accessible to all, and maintained out of either a local rate or a general tax,—at any rate, maintained so that all might go and say, "I want this knowledge; give it me." Well, I do not care whether you call this education or not,—call it instruction if you will, as distinguished from education,—I say a government cannot educate; that is a task beyond the powers or the sphere of any government. It may instruct, and provide for instruction, but it cannot educate. It is the mother must educate; it is home must educate; it is the teacher who is in the place of a parent that must educate; it is the faithful pastor who heeds the admonition to feed the Saviour's lambs that must educate; it is that faithful clergyman that "lures to brighter worlds, and leads the way." Let these educate, in the higher and nobler sense of the term, and educate all the people, of all classes, that they may not come to the duties of civil and social life mere barbarians, unable to manage their own concerns, and unfit to take a part in influencing the concerns of others: and I say, if this were done, there is another link which ought to be connected with it. I would say, let there be such places for teaching open to all; and let not merely children, but young men who are at work in the daytime, and have their evenings,—let them go to these places; and then, I say, when the inspector of the schools, or some other constituted authority, comes round, let them present themselves before him for examination, and say, "I have learned what the government say these institutions should teach: try me; examine me." If he found the examination satisfactory, I would give that man a certificate which would confer the franchise upon him as long as he lived, and wherever he might be.

I feel that I must say but a few more words. They shall be devoted to what I think the first great object of public life—the future well-being of the working classes. For them I think prospects are opening which are full of brilliant promise. Free trade is beginninh its good work for

them. It is only beginning yet. Emigration is beginning its good work for them; but that, too, is only beginning yet. In the last year it is calculated that a thousand persons per day left this country for Australia and other regions. Well, they leave no vacancy but what we can fill up. We are better without them, and they are better without us. They are our best customers, go where they will. We export to them as colonists at the rate of 2*l.* per head per annum, whilst our highest exports in proportion to the population—those to America—are only 12*s.* per head. And do they not carry with them our fashions, our notions? Do they not show us, when our turn or that of others may come, how to go out and join them in those new and promising regions? Must there not be a diminished competition where competition has pressed the most hardly and the most sorely upon the state of the labourer? Why, look at the change which has taken place in the condition of the most defenceless class of workpeople in this whole nation. There was a letter from Lord Shaftesbury the other day in the *Times;* his lordship was made rather sore by some retorts of the Americans upon the lady philanthropists of Sutherland House, whom his lordship had excited to movement; and Lord Shaftesbury thus replies to the allegations of the American writer. The American writer says: "London contains 33,000 needlewomen, who earn on an average only 4½*d.* a day by working fourteen hours." Shameful enough. But listen how Lord Shaftesbury replies to this: "An offer was made," he says, "through myself, a short time ago, to provide lodgings and 6*s.* a week for two or three hundred female hands required in the north of England. The proposition was laid before this formerly suffering class, but rejected, because their actual condition was so much better in London." Well, now, what had done this? Not any of Lord Shaftesbury's own philanthropic interferences,—no putting down of Moses and the slop-sellers,—free trade, mainly, I take it, has achieved this result for the poorest, the most distressed, the most helpless of our population. Does not that teach the lesson, that to their own clear heads, to their own strong hands, the working people of this country must look,—to their own prudence, care, energy, and perseverance?

When saying this, I must advert for a moment to a

subject which has often in the borough, both in this place and in other places, been pressed upon my attention. I allude to the Ten Hours' Bill. I allude to it now that I am returned as one of your representatives, to say that no assertion of mine, however strong, that no declaration I have made, in any time or place, on this subject, goes beyond what I at present adhere to; and I am ready to act fully and entirely up to all that I have ever said. But, while recognising the principle of Mr. John Fielden's Bill not to interfere with adult male labour, and to stop excessive female labour, that of young persons and of children, yet, as I am sorry to find from the reports of the inspectors that that Bill is extensively violated, I am ready to go any reasonable length to repress that violation, and to enforce conformity with the law. I would say, that if a man obstinately violates it, if he is convicted once, and again, and again,—after that third conviction, I would take care he should do so no more, and in that case I would agree with the proposition popular amongst many of you,—I would say, restrict the moving power, so that he shall have no ability to violate the law. He would have deserved his punishment in that case, and let him submit to its endurance. I repeat this, because I would not have it said by any one that I have ever uttered opinions whilst only a candidate that I am not fully prepared to act up to now that I have the honour of being one of your representatives.

But it is not, I confess, to this that I look mainly for the elevation of the working classes. It is to the calling forth of more prudence and more thought; it is to more of that coöperation by which the aggregate of your small earnings may realise something which deserves the name of capital. It is to see the broad line narrowed that parts the capitalist and the operative; to see it so narrowed that it may be passed over with facility, and that we may cease to regard it as one of the great distinctions of the classes of this country. Look what is done by coöperation in the higher classes. Look at the princely clubs of London, with all the luxuries they provide. A small subscription from a large number of members realises even for men of wealth far more than they could ever hope to have from their own resources. Look at your own freehold land societies. There is the path of progress; mark it; press

forward in it; and take care that mere material prosperity be not the only prosperity which you are ambitious of realising.

There is more than this; there is an intellectual, an artistic, a moral prosperity, that I desiderate for the working classes of this country. I would have you all familiar with the great writers of our own language. I would have you all know something of the arts and sciences which adorn and refine humanity. I would have you all appreciate, not in that vulgar mode which elevates military glory above all other honour,—but I would have you appreciate intellectual and moral greatness; and by doing so, enhance that greatness in your own minds and lives. It was said of the Athenian population, that there was not one amongst them—not a citizen, however poor—that did not know the refinements of their most refined language, and have some knowledge of their great poets and philosophers. It has been said in reply to this remark, and as an objection to the great body of the people in a modern nation doing the like, that the Athenians had slaves that did all their drudgery. Well, I hope to see the time when the working classes of England will be employing their slaves, who are ready made for their hands. You may have slaves too,—slaves, not fellow-men, with bones and muscles, nerves, brains, and hearts, like yourselves, but slaves of iron, slaves of steel, slaves of steam, slaves that pass to and fro across the waters, slaves of the winds and of the waves, and of the elemental powers of nature. Make these your slaves, and then at home in your exertions, abroad in your emigration, go forth to replenish the world and subdue it, and the subdued world will yield you its large blessings in return. This is what I desiderate, hope for, and shall be glad more and more confidently with each returning year to anticipate. It has been often said, and is a somewhat trite saying, that on the British empire the sun never sets. Oh, on that empire may the sun of intelligence and moral truth and good rise never to set! May that unsetting sun behold the large regions spreading abroad in their mighty extent across the surface of the earth! May it behold them no longer bound in the frosts of oppression, no longer devastated by the storms of war, nor ever again entombed in the darkness of ignorance!

No. II.

SPEECH AT OLDHAM.

February 7th, 1853.

THE heartfelt gratification which I should have derived from any one of these testimonies of respect is increased by their combination. I rejoice in receiving at the same time these marks of approval from the non-electors, and from the young men so honourably engaged in the mutual instruction societies. The combination is one which asserts the two great rights of human nature. It corresponds with the inscription on the signet-ring which I bear on my finger, having received it here a few nights ago, and which declares education to be "the birthright of all." I am one of an old school of philosophers and politicians, believers in natural rights. I think that man, as man, has inherent and universal rights; and of these I take the two most important to be, the right to the development of his faculties by means of education, and the right to his share in controlling the concerns of the community of which he is born a member. I say, there is the right to education—the right of the child, in the first instance, from parents or friends. The child comes into the world helpless indeed; but those connected with his birth have contracted obligations, sacred obligations, towards the human being thus produced. They have no right to turn him, helpless, ignorant, perhaps useless and pernicious, upon the world. They are bound to endeavour for his development, physically, mentally, morally; and if parents be unwilling or unable to do this, then, I say, the community has a right to step in—the state has a right, in the character and services of the various citizens of whom it is composed—it has a right to be free from the nuisance of having, from time to time, shoals of ignorant, uninstructed barbarians thrust into society, to the utter confusion of all its elements of order. Whether we look, therefore, to the parents or to the state, I say, education is the birthright of the human being, an inherent right; and I say, as for the other form of natural right to which I have adverted, that man is not produced now, like the first man, without social relations; we are born into society—society receives an

accession of members—it receives the prospect of future services from the toil that tends to its enrichment, from the efforts which may tend to its aggrandisement—and in return it ought to recognise every new-come member; and if he cannot exercise the functions of a citizen without previous instruction, the state, that claims his obedience to the duties of a citizen, is bound for its own part to bring home to him the means by which he may be instructed.

These rights of each one are the rights of all. We are all born equal. The puling infant is as helpless, whether it be the child of the peasant or of the sovereign. It has similar claims upon others—similar duties are to be exercised towards it. I will not believe that there is not universal and inherent right; I will not believe that some classes are born to command and others to obey, without respect to personal merits or qualities; I will never believe that some inherit a title to oppress, and others a liability to be oppressed,—until I see some children born into the world with saddles upon their backs, and others born ready booted and spurred in order to ride them. Whenever such a phenomenon occurs, I shall then, so far as it goes, but no farther, recognise the inherent right of some classes to be the rulers and masters of other classes. But so long as I see all humanity equal in birth, equal in its destiny to exertion and suffering, equal, again, in the mouldering level of the grave,—so long shall I believe in the natural equality of men, and in the universal existence of native and inherent rights. Those rights were asserted in the American revolution; spite of that foul blot of slavery, and in condemnation of it, there stands the constitutional declaration of the United States that "all men are born free and equal." That truth cannot be destroyed until you reverse the American revolution. It was again reannounced to the world at the opening of the French revolution—again repeated and echoed from nation to nation. Nor is it on such pillars as these that the principle rests. It is declared in the scriptures we revere that "All ye are brethren;" and those who supersede the doctrine, must dispose of Christianity itself.

I accept with pleasure these marks of your regard, from the manner in which they have been presented to me; not merely from the kind and laudatory terms employed, but

because they are associated with feelings which mark in the strongest manner your appreciation of my humble but continued endeavours to benefit my fellow-creatures. I do not—if I may take any such slight exception to a single sentence—I do not take them as any compensation or alleviation for any indignity which may be thought to have been put upon me by certain occurrences a few months ago. I assure you that those occurrences have passed away from my memory. I have no wish to look back on them; or if I have, I only look back in this point of view—that there was a certain compliment implied in them; for those who endeavoured to prevent my voice being heard by the people of Oldham testified thereby that they thought words of truth falling from me would have their weight with you, were they allowed to be heard. With that I dismiss them from my thoughts.

Adverting to the manner of this testimonial, I recognise with strong feelings the language used by those young men who are so worthily associated. My sympathies are with them. I have known something of what their struggles and efforts must be. I have known what it is to snatch hours from necessary engagements, in order to employ them in the culture of the mind; and if in any way I can aid and promote their efforts, it would be to me not only a heartfelt satisfaction, but I should feel it a duty, recurring to the events of my own earlier life, remembering how, while I often toiled alone, at other times I was cheered by sympathy and encouragement. Sir, I value this testimonial for a certain appropriateness in it. Our triumphant generals, returning from victorious campaigns, have swords presented to them; this (*taking up the pen*) is the sword you give me. And in the feeling in which you give it, I accept it. He who presents the sword says, "Go and kill!" Those who present the pen say, "Go and teach!" Yes, the pen is my sword—not to lop off a limb, but to lop off a prejudice; not to cut the throat of an enemy, but to stab to the heart a fallacy: it is the weapon of the warfare which I would wage with all the enemies of the true and the good; and I trust, in the strength you give me, to wield that sword more energetically than ever. Nor is it only in the political or the literary warfare that this weapon is used. It has sometimes held its place in spiritual con-

flict. It has put down bigotry, persecution, and priestly assumption; it has humbled and put to flight those who would have kept the world in darkness. You give me an inkstand. That is one of the weapons that wrought the great reformation of the fifteenth century; and the legend about Martin Luther, whatever of literal truth there may be in it, is most expressive in its meaning. When Luther, it is said, was translating the scriptures, the devil continually appeared to him, and tormented him and interrupted his work, until Luther threw his inkstand at the devil. The mark of the ink—they say it was printer's ink—is seen upon the wall to this day: the devil fled, and the translation of the scriptures was completed. And by such weapons may we put to flight all the devils that would excite man against man—that would stimulate him to torture his brother, to imprison him, or to deprive him of his political and civil rights: they are of the same spirit—all of the nature of persecution. With such weapons may you and I put to flight and lay for ever all the demons that haunt this country.

Sir, in the honourable efforts of those who are associated for mutual instruction, and whose efforts I consider always conjointly with those of all who are aspiring to their political rights, is it not a shame, a blot, a foul disgrace upon this country, that the very means of information and instruction should be subjected to taxation? It is not merely the child at school; the young man finds his book all the dearer, he finds more difficulty in obtaining information, either on the events of past times in history, or on those of the current day in the newspapers—he finds these means of knowledge rendered more costly by the interference of taxation. Why, what has taxation to do with such subjects? The paper duty, with its three-quarters of a million, the stamp duty, and the advertisement duty—that paltry thing, with its 120,000*l.* or thereabouts of revenue—what are these but totally inconsistent with all enlightened political principles, with all justice and philanthropy, and with all free-trade principles? Why, how can you talk of free trade, when a man cannot announce to the public his wares but he must pay so much to the government? Is that the way in which we should encourage the interchange of the produce of one man's toil with

another's? And on whom does this bear the most hard? It is a tax for the suppressing of trade—that is one odious aspect of it; but it is a most unfair tax on the different classes of society.

I took the trouble one day of analysing the advertisements in the *Times*, on one of those days when they put forth their supplement crowded with advertisements. Well, I found that altogether there was about half a million's worth of property advertised for auction, and that this paid, in the whole, some four pounds or five pounds duty to government. And then I found scores and hundreds of servants "wanting places,"—liable to the severest privations, many of them, from their being out of place,—I found these paying twice, three times, four times as much taxation as those by whom this vast amount of property was going to be transferred from one possessor to another. I found among the classes subjected to this heavy impost that governesses seeking for situations, in which, on the condition of attending to so many children, they were to have a few pounds per annum, were taxed 1*s.* 6*d.* for every application they made for such employment. I found that even the poor laundress could not apply for the family washing without passing under this infamous taxation. I found foreigners liable to it,—accomplished men, refugees from different countries, able to teach all the languages of modern Europe and of ancient time—ready to do all this for a shilling or sixpence a lesson—yet obliged to pay this same hateful impost. And I say, if the window-tax was bad, as blocking out the light of heaven from people's habitations, is not this a bad tax, which blocks up the avenues of the mind, shuts up the windows of the soul, and does what taxation can do to condemn us to perpetual darkness?

Consider the effect of this upon those who aspire to be the instructors of the community. Now, how valuable are many of the publications which are attempted, at a very low price, in order to communicate useful information —many of them by men of high talent or genius, many of them by men of large industry and knowledge; and yet we find them stopped by these taxes. We find that Messrs. Chambers, who have done so much, have once or twice been obliged to give up their publications, some particular series, because the taxation to the government prevented

even their immense circulation from yielding a profitable return. And this is not all. Look at the temptations under which you place your writers. A man conducting one of these publications, if it be a twopenny one for instance, can scarcely make it replace his expenses, to say nothing of profit, under a circulation of 60,000 or 70,000. What is the consequence? If he has the talent to raise his work—if he dares to confront any popular prejudice, or if he opposes any falsehood which has already a wide grasp of the minds of the people—his circulation falls below that limit; he cannot afford to continue it at a loss; he must either tamper with his own conscience, or retire from the task he has undertaken.

I say, that a wise government should do any thing in its power to encourage those who, with ability, undertake thus, in some measure, to guide and inform their fellow-creatures. Instead of that, by this enhancement of the price of their work, by this increased risk, we disable them from their most useful sphere of operation, and we do as much as we can to make them pander to every prejudice and fallacy that may have an extensive hold of the population of the country. And who is it that we tax? Not only the living, but the mighty dead, whose names adorn our country's history more than those of all our generals and admirals—more even than those of all our legislators and statesmen. We find a writer with such power as Milton to soar to the heaven of heavens, and paint things of eternal worth in strains of song that are not unworthy of the subject,—and what do we do with our paper-tax? Why, we tax him, and endeavour to interpose a barrier between him and the public. We find a Shakespeare, with that versatility of power, with that deep knowledge of human nature, who can appeal to all the variety of faculties and feelings in us, ministering at once to enjoyment and elevation of feeling —and we tax him. We find an eloquent writer of the Church of England like Bishop Jeremy Taylor, whose words might penetrate millions of hearts, who might recover to the bosom of the elder Church those who have associated themselves with newer sects—but the government for once forgets its adhesion to the Church, and taxes him. We find a man amongst the Dissenters like Dr. Watts, often called "the sweet singer of Israel," whose hymns have

been the language of expression of thousands of souls in their times of distress and calamity, or of devotion and thanksgiving—and we tax him. We find such people as Chambers and Cassell issuing works for the general instruction of the people, and promoting self-education—and we tax them. In fact, we endeavour by this fiscal impost to close every avenue, and to keep knowledge, truth, goodness, morality, and religion at the utmost possible distance; we warn them off the premises as intruders, and say, "This is the House of Ignorance; we defend it; it is a castle which you may not and shall not enter."

Well, when we look to provision for the younger classes of society, what is the conduct of government, and what is the course which the address presented to me this evening would lead us to pursue as the most desirable? It is said that the new ministry mean to appoint an educational commission. I should like to know for what purpose. If that commission is only to inquire whether the people universally be as well educated as they ought, I think we know well enough how that case stands, without their instituting any examination of it. If that commission be to inquire whether the system of teaching generally pursued in the schools of this country is the best, I think that they may be answered without any such inquiry. We know that in this country education is torn limb from limb by conflicting churches and sects, each of which is making theology its paramount object, and education its subordinate object. Well, there is the cause, and this never can be a satisfactory state of things. We need only look abroad. In America there are their common schools, to which the Catholic and Protestant, the Episcopalian and Independent, Baptist, or other sect, all send their children, mixing harmoniously together; and who will tell me that one of those children will be so likely to hate and to abuse and persecute another of the children in after life, when he remembers how they took sweet counsel together in their boyish days, went to the same school, and sported on the same playground? Nor is this the only intermixture which takes place. A gentleman told me that he knew this fact—that a visitor to one of the American schools said, "Who are those children? Who is that boy yonder, and who is the boy next him that is helping him on with his lesson?"

The answer was, "Why, the boy yonder is the son of the President of the United States, and the boy sitting next him, and helping him on with his lesson—a help which he will gratefully remember—is the son of the town crier of the village." And even in Ireland, in some degree, this has been realised; in all the schools under the system of national education in Ireland, there is a separation of general instruction from the theological instruction; there are times and places set apart, at which the Catholic priest, the Protestant clergyman, the Presbyterian or other Dissenting minister, takes charge of the children connected with his Church, grounds them in their religious knowledge and duties, and all this apart from the rest; and then the children go back again, they mix together, and their progress is allowed to be such as to raise that system very far indeed above any thing we have accomplished in this country. There is a proof of this, because in Ireland the number of criminals who can read and write is a continually diminishing percentage; in this country it is the reverse.

Now, it has been sometimes said, Why should you make one man pay for the education of the children of another? This has been put as a conclusive argument against any common mode of raising the funds for the necessary outlay. Why? I will tell you why. In the first place, if he is able to pay, and is a good man, who likes to see men made something more than beasts of the field or beasts of burden, he will not grudge paying for his neighbour's children. But I will put that out of the question. Suppose that he does not pay for this education, is that much consolation to him when he has to pay for their pauperism? Had not he better send them to school at his expense, than let them go to the poor-house, and burden him and his neighbours much more heavily? If he demurs to pay for their education, let him remember that he may pay for their blunders and their thievery,—that their crimes may tax him,—firstly, by the property they may abstract from society; and then, by the heavy expenditure for their punishment. I say, the original outlay is an insurance, well and wisely laid out, for the prevention of consequences such as these. Now, some people say, "Oh, but religion! you don't think of teaching them without religion?" I propose no such thing. I propose this,—that religion be

taught by the persons best qualified to teach religion. What I say is this,—that the multiplication table is true, upon all religious systems. I say that there is the same number of shillings in a guinea, and the same number of ounces in a pound, on the Catholic system as there is on the Protestant system. I say, too, that there has not been a religion on the face of the earth which made falsehood, theft, violence, and crime, virtues. These are denounced by all; and surely here is agreement enough to go some way upon a common system. But they say "the Church must educate," and they are willing to pay all kinds of religion, so that religion be but taught, and made what they call the basis of education. Well, as they include the Roman Catholic among the systems, I would just remark how the case stands in the city of Rome. Whatever may be said of Rome in other respects—and whatever veneration, with which I do not quarrel, the Catholic may feel for the metropolis of his religion—I believe no one can deny, that it is about one of the most licentious cities on the face of the earth; and yet there is plenty of teaching of this sort, under the direction of the priests. Mr. Laing, the traveller, writing in 1846, says: "In every street in Rome, there are at short distances public primary schools for the education of the children of the lower and middle classes of the neighbourhood; Rome, with a population of 158,000, has 372 primary schools, where, according to the official statement, with 482 teachers, there are 14,000 children attending them." And yet, you know the results. If there is a place to be pointed out where debauchery and theft and assassinations are most abundant, it is in that city, so well schooled, but schooled theologically, and not scientifically or morally. Why, the state of that city is such, that it is said a Jew was once converted to Christianity by going there; and every body was very much surprised at the result. "Converted to Christianity by going to Rome!" they said; "we thought it would rather give you such a disgust for Christianity, you would never hear the name again!" "No," he said, "I saw so much wickedness in Rome, that I am convinced, unless it were miraculously upheld by Christianity, the city must have sunk into an abyss of ruin."

But there is a way in which too many people use the

sacred name of religion. They connect it with ignorance, with ambition, with usurpation, and with cruelty. Nor does this happen to Christianity alone. An English traveller, staying at Algiers, saw there a remarkably handsome scymetar; the blade was of the finest steel, it was beautifully flexible, it was sharper than any razor, and it had cut upon it certain mysterious letters in the Arabic language. "What," said the English traveller,—"what is the meaning of those letters, and what is the use of this scymetar?" "Why, the letters," they said, "are a verse quoted from the Koran of Mahomet, and mean, 'God is merciful;' and this scymetar is what the executioner cuts people's heads off with!" Oh, there are those who, in the name of religion, would reverse the miracle which we read of in the Temptation recorded in the Gospels: that temptation was, to turn stones into bread; and they, having the bread of life in their hands, would turn it into stones to pelt their neighbours with.

Well, sir, if the education committee could not interfere in this point of the matter, there is, I confess, work which they might be advantageously set to do. They might overhaul the ancient endowments of our various grammar schools; they might ask, what funds exist for educational purposes;—and if the estimates of rumour have much correctness in them, these funds are so large, that they would almost suffice for the purposes of national education, without any taxation at all. I know some would say, "Oh, but remember the will of the founders; these are tied up by the will of the founders?" And are we always so very reverential to the will of the founders? Why, how did we come by our churches and our cathedrals? Did we, the Protestants of England, found them? They were built by men who wanted to have masses said for their souls perpetually, after they were dead: and the majority of the nation, regarding that as an outworn creed, said, "No, we will apply them to more reasonable purposes." I ask you to apply the same principle to schools. These grammar schools, many of them, were founded when a knowledge of Latin and Greek was supposed to be the very sum and substance of all human acquirements; nothing was thought of beyond that. Why, since that time, other languages, modern languages, have arisen, of immeasurably greater importance in the practical concerns of life; old sciences

have been extended, new sciences have been discovered; the progress of invention has gone on with accelerated pace; and, if we have respect to the will of the founders, I should construe it in this way,—that the founders meant that knowledge should be communicated, and that people should be instructed: and if so, we best carry out their purposes by including all the great area of modern tuition within the compass of these ancient endowments.

I take this matter to be a very simple one. The duties of religious guidance devolve with a very solemn responsibility upon certain parties. Leave those duties there. The state, composed as it is of persons of all religious denominations and persuasions, has no business to attempt to inculcate a religion; but the state has a right to expect something like this,—that a subject shall have some acquaintance with the common methods of computation,—that he shall be able to read and write,—that he shall know something of the land we live in,—that he shall have some glimpse into the elements of different sciences,—that he shall have a notion of those social duties which all religions acknowledge and inculcate, and which are essential, not only to the well-being, but, we may say, to the existence, of society. I say, let the state bring home the opportunity of these acquirements to every man's door, let it put them within the reach of those young men the greater part of whose time is spent in needful toil, but who are willing to give their evenings and spare hours to such occupations,—and then, let any one of them be free to present himself before certain competent persons, appointed for the purpose, and say, "Here I am; examine me: have I attained the requisite degree of knowledge which is thought necessary for all the citizens of a free country?" and if he has so attained, I say, then a certificate of competency given to him should make such a man a free man and a voter, to the very end of his days, in whatever town or part of the country he may reside.

In this way, the two subjects which have been brought before us this evening harmoniously blend. In this way, the suffrage, by easy gradations, would become strictly and properly universal. It would be every one's own fault if he did not make the requisite attainments. And people can do that even at an advanced age. I have at home, in

my desk, a beautiful specimen of handwriting, which was produced by an old offender and criminal in gaol, who learned to write under the prison tuition in his sixtieth year; and if an old thief of sixty can do this, what may not young and enterprising honest men do, through their earlier years, or even in the maturity of their lives?

Sir, on the intentions of the government on these subjects—the suffrage and education—we are yet very much in the dark. In fact, as to the new ministry generally, we may be said to be in a state of waiting and watching for the dawn of their career. We are glad of every glimpse that we can get; and a few rays were afforded us on Thursday last by a cabinet minister, a late Chancellor of the Exchequer, and future President of the Board of Control, —that is to say, Governor of India; for he partakes of a remarkable aptitude, which certain persons are said to have, that they can move with facility from one post to another, fit alike for all. We see a man distinguish himself in regard to the colonies, and he is put to the Board of Works; and we see a very able militia officer set to be Secretary of the Admiralty; and we see another, who has been a colonial minister, and is deep in Church matters, and he is made Chancellor of the Exchequer; and so, in the whole round, they seem to be fit for all things; and if they so regard the universality of their own knowledge, I think they might have a little more respect for the prevalence of knowledge among the whole people.

Now, as to what we learn from Sir C. Wood at the dinner recently given to him at Halifax,—in the first place, he promises something in the way of reform; he introduces it in this manner: "It would be strange, indeed, if there were no faults and no defects in the Reform Act, which the experience of twenty years might bring out." Well, what the experience of twenty years may have brought to Sir Charles Wood, I will not undertake to say; but I know this,—that the defects of the Reform Act required no twenty years' experience to detect their existence. I know that at the moment that Act was passing through the legislature, there were those, Francis Place amongst the rest, who, in a series of articles in the *Morning Chronicle*, showed that the Reform Act would, in no long time, create as precious a nest of small manageable and corrupt boroughs

as existed before that Act. It needs no experience of twenty years to show that voting is not pure and free. This was very well known at that time; the necessity for the ballot had been demonstrated by reasoning and experience before the Reform Bill was introduced; the disproportion of representation to constituencies also existed before, and was somewhat abated by that Act, but only modified and not extinguished, because no general principle was adopted in that Act. However, if experience has made cabinet ministers know that after twenty years which all the world besides knew before, we are rejoiced they are enlightened at last, though so late in the day. But he says, "We propose to proceed upon the principle of the Reform Bill, as advocated in 1832, and so to extend the franchise as to embrace the most intelligent of the classes below those now enfranchised." The principle of the Reform Bill? What was that? Did that connect intelligence with voting at all? Lord J. Russell had, many years before that Bill was introduced, declared that there were a million of men in the country intellectually qualified to exercise the franchise. He did not give the franchise to that million—nor to above half that million—by the Reform Act. Intelligence is not the principle,—bricks and mortar are the principle of the Reform Act. Do you live in a 10*l.* house? That is the question. Why, that 10*l.* house may indicate a very different social status in one part of the country from what it does in another, and, at any rate, it is no gauge whatever of the brains of the man by whom that house is inhabited. Well, then, Sir Charles, of course, says, "We are to go on with very great caution,"—like a cat stepping on a wall. He has a hit at the freemen, as if they were the most corrupt body that ever existed. Well, something may be said for these poor freemen. You will remember that they belong to a class that existed under the old corporations,—and what were those corporations but a continual machinery of corruption? and on them rests the guilt if this class be debased. But I don't believe in the justice of this indiscriminate censure. Why, when St. Albans was overhauled last year, it was ascertained that out of the constituency there were but two uncorrupt voters—only two in the borough—and these belonged to the despised class of freemen; among the 10*l.* voters there was not a single excep-

tion to the corruption. Well, Sir Charles Wood, to enforce his warnings, says, "There is hardly a country in Europe which, in the last four or five years, has not attempted a revolution." That is true enough; but, to make it a case in point, Sir Charles should have shown that this arose from there being a too extended franchise in these countries; he should have shown that too much political right had made people revolutionary,—that in Prussia, in Italy, and in Hungary the people had too much right and influence—that they did not know what to do with the surplus, and so they made a revolution with it. I think we may safely say that, from the commencement of history, revolutions have never been the result of too much political influence by the people. But the grand appeal of Sir C. Wood is to the example of France; he says, "The votes in France were taken by universal suffrage, and voting by ballot; now, gentlemen, just consider what the effect of this vote by ballot is!" Well, when Sir C. Wood undertakes to read the moral of a great event to his countrymen, he should look at all the lessons which that event teaches. We may probably differ in opinion from these millions of Frenchmen,—we may very much disapprove, we may detest and despise the present government of France,—I will not argue that matter at all. But I will say, that the ballot and universal suffrage are not the only things which have had to do with that government, or of which Sir C. Wood might have told us to take warning by the example of France. Sir C. Wood might have said this: "Look at France, and consider what the military have done in effecting this change! See what the result of large armaments in that country has been! Look at the slavery connected with a military preponderance in society! Take note of this, gentlemen, and beware how you sanction large army estimates and great military establishments in this country!" Or Sir C. Wood might have said, "Look at the effect of the Established Church in France,—see how Louis Napoleon courts the priests, and how the priests, in return, court and support Louis Napoleon! See what a hierarchy, possessing great wealth and great ambition and great influence, will do for the destruction of freedom and for the establishment of despotism! Take warning, gentlemen, by the example of France, and remember the revenues of your own bishops and arch-

bishops! think of the great sinecurists, with their hundreds and thousands, paying their poor curates 60*l.* or 70*l.* a year! Look at the immense funds locked up in your ecclesiastical institutions,—take warning, gentlemen, and reform your Established Church!" And Sir Charles Wood might have said, "Look how that Louis Napoleon is endeavouring to consolidate his power by extravagant outlays, to gratify the taste of the French people for tinselled finery,—look at the enormous wealth which he is lavishing on processions and exhibitions, and on pomps and paraphernalia, and on the gilding and ornament of his palaces,—take warning by France, gentlemen, and when you hear of 80,000*l.* expended on the passage of the corpse of a great warrior from the Horse Guards to St. Paul's, take warning by France;—when you hear of the sums continually expended to build and keep palaces in repair,—or when you hear of millions upon millions lavished on that gorgeous abortion, our new House of Parliament—with nothing convenient, but every thing glittering, with green dragons and blue lions adorning its windows, to show that Sir C. Barry has a medieval taste—money sunk wholesale in the very mud of the banks of the Thames,—think of France, gentlemen, when you find these outlays made; oh, take warning by France, you Englishmen, and button up your breeches' pockets!" I have thus endeavoured just to finish Sir C. Wood's elucidation of the moral of recent transactions in France, and their application to this country. I will only add one thing more. He says the ballot and universal suffrage have done this. So say I: but what then? We think it a very bad deed that seven millions have voted for Louis Napoleon. Did they think it very bad? Can any one presume to say, whatever our opinion of him and his government, that he is not the choice of the majority of the nation? Then I say again with Sir Charles Wood, the ballot and universal suffrage have given expression to the will of the nation,—an erroneous will, I grant, in our apprehension,—but their will. The ballot and universal suffrage have given expression to the erring will, it may be, of the French nation; and so would the ballot and universal suffrage give expression to what I hope would be the not so much erring will of the British people.

The blending of the cultivation of the mind with the aspirations to political right, is, in proportion to its extent, a pledge of peace and of improvement to the country. Sir Charles Wood does not seem very apprehensive of a great war. He professes to "have no fear that Louis Napoleon will come over at the head of 200,000 men;" but, most curiously, towards the conclusion of his speech, he urges that we are to be very strenuous in our national defences, because "5000 Frenchmen may land upon the Sussex coast." What in the world should 5000 Frenchmen do on the Sussex coast, without a general, without the sanction of any one in authority in France,—because that presupposes, between the governments, remonstrances and so on? —but there are to be 5000 soldiers, seized with a spirit of vagabondage, to start on a buccaneering expedition. And he asks, What are we to do, if we do not strengthen our defences? Why, the poor unhappy wretches! if they do land, the best thing to do would be to send down the police division A, and take them all into custody. A notion of this sort is utterly chimerical and perfectly childish, and shows the straits to which men are reduced when they have a position to defend which there is no solid ground for in fact and argument.

I return to say, that this junction of mental and political progress is a pledge both for peace and improvement. The victories thus gained are enduring victories; the triumphs of the pen can never be reversed like those of the sword. Our philosophers have demonstrated truths centuries ago, and those truths now rule the belief and the minds of men. But where are the victories of the sword,—where are the most recent, the greatest, and the most splendid of them? Why, the sun of the same week which shone on the funeral car of the hero who demolished the empire of the first Napoleon in France, shone also on the resurrection of that very empire which he was supposed to have eternally destroyed. Let us lose, after this, faith in the victories of the sword. Let us look to those victories over ignorance and error and superstition which are gained by the power of the pen. Let the inkstand, and not the powder magazine, be our ammunition; and thus we may go on winning for each class good—in knowledge, in industrial attainments, in the use and invention of the arts, in

the enjoyment of literature and of science; thus we may prepare the way for that great progress by which, I trust, the laborious classes, coöperating wisely together for the husbanding of their small resources, may go on, in mind and physical condition alike improving, until difficulties, obstacles, legal interventions, all melt away before them, —until they run in the clear space which belongs to them, as forming the great body of the population of this empire, —until upon restrictive acts, upon feudal castles and palaces, upon ancient monopolies, however long cherished, —until upon the ruins of these shall sit enthroned the giant genius of emancipated industry. Sir, it is by union, by laborious united exertion, that this is to be accomplished.

I am happy that we have with us here to-night the President of the Parliamentary and Financial Reform Association,—of that central society, in harmony with which you have formed a society here which numbers its members by hundreds. He will probably continue the train of thought which I have endeavoured to suggest; and I will, therefore, conclude by saying that it is by associating yourselves together, it is by linking mind to mind and heart to heart that all great moral and intellectual victories in the world have been achieved. Sacred or secular, this has been their power. The first Christians, wherever they were converted from paganism, formed themselves into churches, little brotherhoods of men who knew one another, and acted together; and it was by multiplying these over the great extent of the Roman empire that the gods of Greece and Rome were made to bow down before Christ, and the apostate Julian was forced to exclaim, "Galilean, thou hast conquered!" It was in this spirit the Reformation was achieved; here and there a man of intellect sprang up that saw farther than others, but he was sure to be persecuted—he was doomed to martyrdom; but they multiplied, they leagued themselves together, and at last the reign of darkness, which had extended for ages, broke down, and men arose who, if they did not fully carry out, at least taught the elements of the great principles of religious liberty. It was by thus associating that Clarkson began with a few friends, and stirred up their minds like his own on the question of negro slavery; it spread from one to another, and those efforts continued for year after year, until, after the lapse

of half a century, they saw the completion of their wishes in the abolition of slavery throughout the British dominions. It was by this Daniel O'Connell conquered political rights for the Catholics of Ireland; by this that he occasioned his own return for county Clare, and presented himself at the bar of the House of Commons,—himself a power which the House of Commons and the House of Lords were soon fain to acknowledge. It was by this that seven men met in a small room at Manchester, and organised that mighty Anti-Corn-Law League, which, as was said the other night, conquered three administrations, which conquered hosts of prejudices, and ushered in the great change in our national policy from monopoly to free trade. By this means of association we hope to guide this country onwards until the time when the natural rights, the birthright of education and citizenship in a civilised community, shall both be recognised, and we shall see throughout the land an intelligent self-governed nation—the most glorious epoch of our own history, and making our country the glory of all nations; for the reformation of England will be the regeneration of the world.

No. III.

SPEECH AT ROYTON.

February 12th, 1853.

I ACCEPT this juvenile present with great pleasure; for to win young hearts, to act upon young minds, to feel that young blood is flowing freely, and that young pulses are beating strongly for whatever is good and improving in the world, ought to be a worthy object of contemplation to all of us, and I feel it an honour that by the young, as in other cases by the aged veterans of reform, I have been so heartily greeted in this place. It is now within a few months of seven years since I stood in this very room, and delivered one of my first addresses to the people connected with this important borough. In April 1846 you gave me your first hearty welcome. I now receive your second; and I receive it gladly from the people of Royton, who were amongst the first to tender me their kindness and

support,—who, as they were amongst the first, have been amongst my firmest friends—who have stood by me when the day went in our favour, who stood by me when the day went against us,—who, through good report and evil report, in peaceful times and amid scenes such as you have had, of confusion and of violence, have ever been true to me,—who with each successive election of the three which have been contested for the borough of Oldham, have given me a majority, whilst some other districts left me in a minority, —who gave me that majority even when, in July last, the entire borough put me in a minority, and who increased their numbers from one election to the other, and have thus shown a spirit of kindness, of confidence, and of generous appreciation, which I cannot but feel to the very bottom of my heart.

In speaking to you on the present occasion, I labour under one disadvantage. I have already addressed two very large meetings in the borough of Oldham. I have forestalled much which I might have said to you on the present occasion; and I have no wish to repeat here what I have already said in another place; but as on those two occasions I adverted to various points of political interest; —as the circumstances of those meetings, and the addresses delivered to me, and the presents made to me, led me to speak of the place of woman in society, of the influence she was qualified to exert, and of the influence which she ought to possess;—as they led me to speak of the general cause of reform and its advocates, of their history, and of their prospects;—as they led me to enter into the subject of education in its various phases, and especially in its relation to and its connection with the suffrage;—as I had also occasion at those meetings to speak of labour, its duties and its rights,—to speak of it as the lot of a large portion of humanity, but as a lot which had been manfully endured, and would be working out, as I trust, its own way to improvement, physical, mental, and moral;—as I had to speak of excessive labour, and of my wish for its being reduced so that all might have the opportunity for mental culture as well as for reasonable enjoyment;—I shall pass by those topics on the present occasion, and address myself to that which relates to all of them indeed—namely, to the very spirit and essence of political institutions,—to the

motive of political zeal,—to that which I deem more important than any of the external paraphernalia of mere institutions.

I say, then, that in my view the great end and aim of all politics—the reason why any rational or good man should meddle with politics—is this, that they should be rendered subservient to the development of humanity,—to the maturing of man in mind and body, spirit and circumstances; to the making of man—I speak of man and woman under the generic term—all that the great Creator intended him to be and has formed him capable of being. And I believe that every human being that comes into the world has, as the motto of the ring they gave me at Oldham expressed it, education for his or her birthright. I believe that we are entitled to it by the dispensations of nature and of Providence, and that every one in society who bears his part as a citizen is fairly and inherently entitled to his share in the management of the concerns of the community of which he is a member. But why is all this? It is that men and women should be more happy as men and women, not as beasts of burden, or beasts of the field, and still less as brutes and savages of the forest. It is that they may show the intellectual powers and the moral dispositions which belong to our common nature; those which it should be the object of all political arrangements and of all institutions to bring to full maturity—that we may say of each, as was said of Brutus in Shakespeare's play of *Julius Cæsar:*

> "His life was gentle; and the elements
> So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up,
> And say to all the world, This was a man."

Well, now, this is not the object of many forms of government; but I say it is the test by which they should be tried. I say that it is my motive for embarking with so much earnestness in a political career. I say it is that by which we may bring to trial the different systems of government. What does the Emperor of Austria or the Czar of Russia think man was made for? Why, he holds

> "The monstrous faith of millions made for one;"

he thinks men were made to be his soldiers, his servants, his slaves. Millions have died that one man might be called

lord; millions have pined in bondage that one might believe that he holds the sceptre of dominion over boundless regions, and that the human beings that live upon the soil are but as so many insects crawling upon the earth in his august presence. Well, I say that human beings cannot thrive under such an arrangement. Humanity sinks, shrivels up, becomes a poor and a despicable thing.

Well, then, there is another theory of politics; and that is, that if we do not exist for one, we exist for a few. There are certain privileged classes whose minds are to be loaded with all the accomplishment and learning of the time; whose houses are to be adorned with all that is grand and beautiful; who are to be the hereditary leaders and chieftains of that portion of the human race which is found in the country where they dwell. This is the old feudal system, by which one man is to be nourished as in a hothouse to an unnatural degree of expansion, while all the rest are left to "bide the pelting of the pitiless storm" as they may, and are to be only an inferior caste in his presence. It was on such a theory as this that a member of the late government, in his juvenile days, spoke out a sentiment of which I hope he has lived to be ashamed, but which expresses the political theory that many still hold,—I allude to those memorable lines by Lord John Manners, in which he exclaims:

> "Let laws and learning, art and science, die;
> But leave us still our old nobility."

Well, I believe we could do much better without our "old nobility" than without law and learning, and art and science.

There is still another theory, which gives, I think, too low an estimate of government and of politics,—I mean that of Edmund Burke, who, in his great admiration of our judicial institutions, says that the whole Constitution of England—I do not remember his exact words, but I know I quote the sentiment correctly,—King, and Lords and Commons, Church and State,—all exist to put twelve honest men into a jury-box. Well, the putting of twelve men into a jury-box is a very desirable thing, especially in times of political persecution; it is our best shield against arbitrary authority; and it is a good thing that our institutions

accomplish that; but that is not the whole great object of human life. Government, society, institutions, are surely meant for something better than mere police work,—merely to keep one man from picking another's pocket, or breaking his head. It is well that they should do this; but that is not enough.

There is still another theory of society—that of the late wit, Sydney Smith, who said that roast mutton and claret were the great end and object of all government, law, and order. Well, that is a very pleasant theory to the people that can enjoy the roast mutton and claret; but how is it to those who find a difficulty in getting any kind of meat, or beer with it, in order to support their existence?

I can never believe but that men are united in society for some better purpose than any of these. They are united in order that they may perform that great work of coöperation which, on a small scale, achieves so many beneficial results, and which a nation should, I think, exhibit on a large scale in all its institutions. So that I have gone into politics with this question constantly in my mind—What will your theories, your forms, your propositions, do for human nature? Will they make man more manly? Will they raise men and women in the scale of creation? Will they lift them above the brutes? Will they call forth their thoughts, their feelings, their actions? Will they make them moral beings? Will they be worthy to tread the earth as children of the common Parent, and to look forward, not only for his blessing here, but for his benignant bestowment of happiness hereafter? If institutions do this, I applaud them; if they have lower aims, I despise them; and if they have antagonistic aims, I counteract them with all my might and strength.

Well, now, let us apply this;—let us see how it works. I am very partial to democratic institutions. I want to see a country governed by its inhabitants,—not by one man, a few men, or a privileged class; and governed for the high and noble purposes I have endeavoured to describe. Well, I say democratic institutions are favourable to this. I say that they call forth all a man's best feelings, and his highest aspirations, and his noblest purposes,—not for their own sakes, but on account of their tendency. I should not care about what we Radical reformers contend for, if all these

changes which we seek were to end in themselves. Whether a man votes by ballot, putting an envelope into a box, or whether he answers a question at the hustings, and gives his vote openly,—in fact, whether he votes at all or not,—whether government be representative or be arbitrary,—I say that these things are comparatively worthless. It is as means that they are good, and not as ends; and I say that as means they are good. I say that when a man feels that he is recognised as a citizen,—that he is not a serf, not one of a slave class,—that he can walk abroad, and can exercise his due share in the nomination of those who make the laws, —that he has not only the bounden obligation upon him to obey those laws, but that he has also his art and part even in the making of them by the machinery of representation; —I say, when a man feels this, it makes him more a man than he was before; it teaches him to respect and venerate himself; it tends even to make him feel that violence, that falsehood, that corrupt arts, are unworthy of him; and that, being a free citizen, he should act like a free citizen, and only do that which may become a man. What is the tendency of slavery? Why, to strip a man of all the best virtues that adorn a man's nature. If a slave has virtues, what are they?—the virtues of a dog rather than of a man! He may be faithful to his owner; he may be obedient and tractable; he may fetch and carry when he is bid;—and what then? Is this what man was made for? Can we show nothing higher, nothing better than this? I say, yes! —and democracy is to do this for us, teaching us that we are all born free and equal, and, in the words of one of our ancient sovereigns, that "laws which bind all, should be assented to by all." Now, there are many people who are not looking to this tendency of democracy, and they say, if we had a perfect despot,—a despot very wise and very benevolent,—that would be better for us than democracy. I say, no; because, suppose the despot does go right as to the external matters of the country, or its material interests at home, and suppose the representative government does blunder,—suppose the people make mistakes, and have to reconsider what they have done, and to retrace their path, —still, there is this difference between the worst form of democracy and the best form of despotism,—that under the despot man has not that self-respect which the self-govern-

ment of a nation imparts to all that belong to that nation. You cannot give him this under a despotism, though it were the despotism of an angel or an archangel. You cannot do this. He is but a child in leading-strings, instead of a man walking straight forward in his own course, guided by his own intellect, which, if it errs, corrects itself by its errors.

Well, I apply this test to other things. I apply it to the free-trade doctrines. I say, Are those doctrines tending to raise and purify and benefit humanity? Well, I find my justification in the way in which they used to be attacked. What was the language of protectionists a few years ago against free-traders? They said, "You will benefit the foreigner;" or, "If you do this, the foreigner will profit by it." "Levy a tax upon corn, as it will be paid by the foreigner." They would have taught the people of this country, in the very teeth of religion, that they were to consider the foreigner as an enemy; that it was an objection to any thing that it would benefit the foreigner. I trust the working people of this country have rejected and thrust from them such unchristian doctrines as these,—such selfish and malevolent feelings. Why, it is one of the beauties of free trade, that if we benefit the foreigner, we benefit ourselves. If the foreigner can produce something we want, and if we can produce something which the foreigner wants, then the man who endeavours to prevent the exchange of those articles is an enemy of the human race. He opposes their material interests as well as their moral feelings. He subjects them to privation where they might have abundance; and he teaches them selfishness and enmity, where they ought to feel brotherly regard, and a common interest, and a delight in the prospect of a common course of prosperity. Well has that working man, who laboured in iron and other metals, who became the poet of the poor,—I mean Ebenezer Elliott, the author of the "Corn-Law Rhymes," who saw so much further than so many of his class at that time, and who spoke to them so emphatically on this matter,—well has he sung, in one of his odes:

"Free Trade like that hath doctrines of love,
And the blessing of plenty and health;
And proclaims, while the angels look down from above,
The marriage of labour and wealth."

I believe that such are the arrangements of nature and Providence, that the freest intercommunication between different states is alike good for all the states concerned in it, and for the different classes of society in each and all those states. What is the end of Providence? Look abroad on the world. See how different climates produce different fruits. See how their varied productions are such, that the inhabitants of one region may reasonably be desirous to have possession of those which are produced in another region. See the infinite diversity, see the changes which a single article has to undergo,—how it has to pass from country to country in order to obtain that final shape and form in which it best ministers to humanity. Look at the silkworm spinning her cocoons in the trees of Lebanon. Look at the cotton-plants, rich in their white blossoms, in the fair South of America. Why, their products cross the broad Atlantic,—they come here; they are subject to your various industrial operations, and then they go back again, in order to clothe even the natives of the very country from which they came,—to give them their garments: and when those garments are worn out, these very articles sometimes undergo another change; they take the form of paper, and circulate through the world the lessons of intelligence and of wisdom. I say, that free trade is a providential doctrine. It teaches us the wisdom of those arrangements by which nations may ultimately, we trust, be led into one great confederation, one brotherhood of communities, rendering and receiving mutual service.

Well, then, again I test by this principle the influence of systems and of institutions and of policies which are favourable to knowledge on the one hand, or promotive of ignorance on the other. Try them, I say. Despotic countries always pursue a system which tends to shut out knowledge from the minds of the subjects of the despot. The late Emperor of Austria did not like new ideas. His successor, I dare say, has the same antipathy. Despots never do like new ideas, or any ideas at all, but the ideas of their power and grandeur, and of subserviency to their greatness. But spread knowledge over a nation, and what is the result? Governments assume a truer and more beneficial form; that mighty power called public opinion is created,—a power which cannons cannot batter down,—

which bayonets cannot stab to death,—which no might of princes, potentates, or armies can bring to nothing,—which holds on its course in spite of all, and in due time will be sure to triumph over all.

On this principle I prefer the peace policy to a war policy. I judge them by the contrast which they afford. This country has had experience of both policies. From 1790 to 1815 we had experience of a war policy. From 1815 to the present time we have had experience of a peace policy. What is the difference between 1790 and 1815? How many reforms were effected? how many wise and good laws were passed, for which, at this moment, you are blessing the authors? What was done, what was felt, while the war-whoop resounded through the nation? Benevolence was a thing almost to be laughed to scorn. Hatred of the French, who were called our national enemies, was burning in the minds of the great majority. The few who protested were subjected to insult, to outrage, to rioting; some of them confined for years, only for wishing to make their fellow-creatures wiser and better; others driven from their country into exile;—and the only relief to these was the blaze of illuminations, darkened by the mourning which so many families in all our large towns had to wear for relatives who had fallen in the battle. Oh, scarcely a soil was there on the face of the earth that was not fertilised by British blood; not a famous river, or a sea, that was not discoloured and stained by British blood; while treasure was poured forth like water, and the country had an enormous burden of debt left upon it that will take many a long generation yet to wipe away. . . .

I am for no premature hostility to the new cabinet, no causeless suspicion against them. Let them, I say, have a fair trial. The administration is comprised of men drawn from very different parties, but of known ability. I cannot feel that entire confidence which would lead me to implicit trust; neither would I cherish that suspicion which shall look with a jaundiced eye upon any thing which they may do or attempt. Let them have the fair trial to which they are entitled. Now, in yesterday's paper we had the programme of some of their intentions; and Lord John Russell's speech, which consisted of little more than a catalogue of the measures that his colleagues intended to introduce, may

give us some glimpses into their future policy. I have made a memorandum of each of the topics which he proposed to bring under the consideration of the House of Commons, and I will just notice them, with the intimation that to each and all of these I shall endeavour to apply the test which I have laid down on the present occasion.

Well, he said, first, that the army and the navy and the ordnance estimates would only provide for the same number of men as had been already voted; but that they would require more money. Well, what is the matter with these men, that they are to cost more money than we were told originally? I suppose something of this sort,—that instead of the militia being out only one month in a year, we may perhaps find that they are permanently embodied; or that instead of resting for the defence of this country on its natural advantages, and on the true hearts and strong arms of those by whom it is inhabited, we are to have expensive military works thrown up in different parts of the island. Well, I cannot conceive that demonstrations of this kind tend to make us a better people, or our neighbours across the Channel either, just at this time; because we have been told by every statesman of importance, of all parties in this country, that there is no reason to apprehend hostilities from our French neighbours. This was repeated again and again by Lord John Russell, by Lord Palmerston, by Lord Derby, and by Mr. D'Israeli. Well, then, why are we to be buckling on our armour, and taking spear and shield, and looking big, and blustering, when there is no particular reason for putting ourselves into such an attitude? Is it not provocative? Does it not tend to make other nations say, "What are these Englishmen about? Look how they are throwing away their money upon military armaments. Do they mean to become a power of a different order,"—which I believe is what many of our statesmen wish,—"and take rank with the great military nations of the continent?" Nature never framed us for this. Our wooden walls are our best defence. The ocean flows around us; it is our proper element and home. We are masters of it; and without the grossest mismanagement of it, we cannot remain other than masters of the empire of the sea. A struggle, I think, would show this; and if so, why, what are we doing with the public money, if we are to have these enlarged estimates?

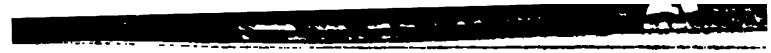
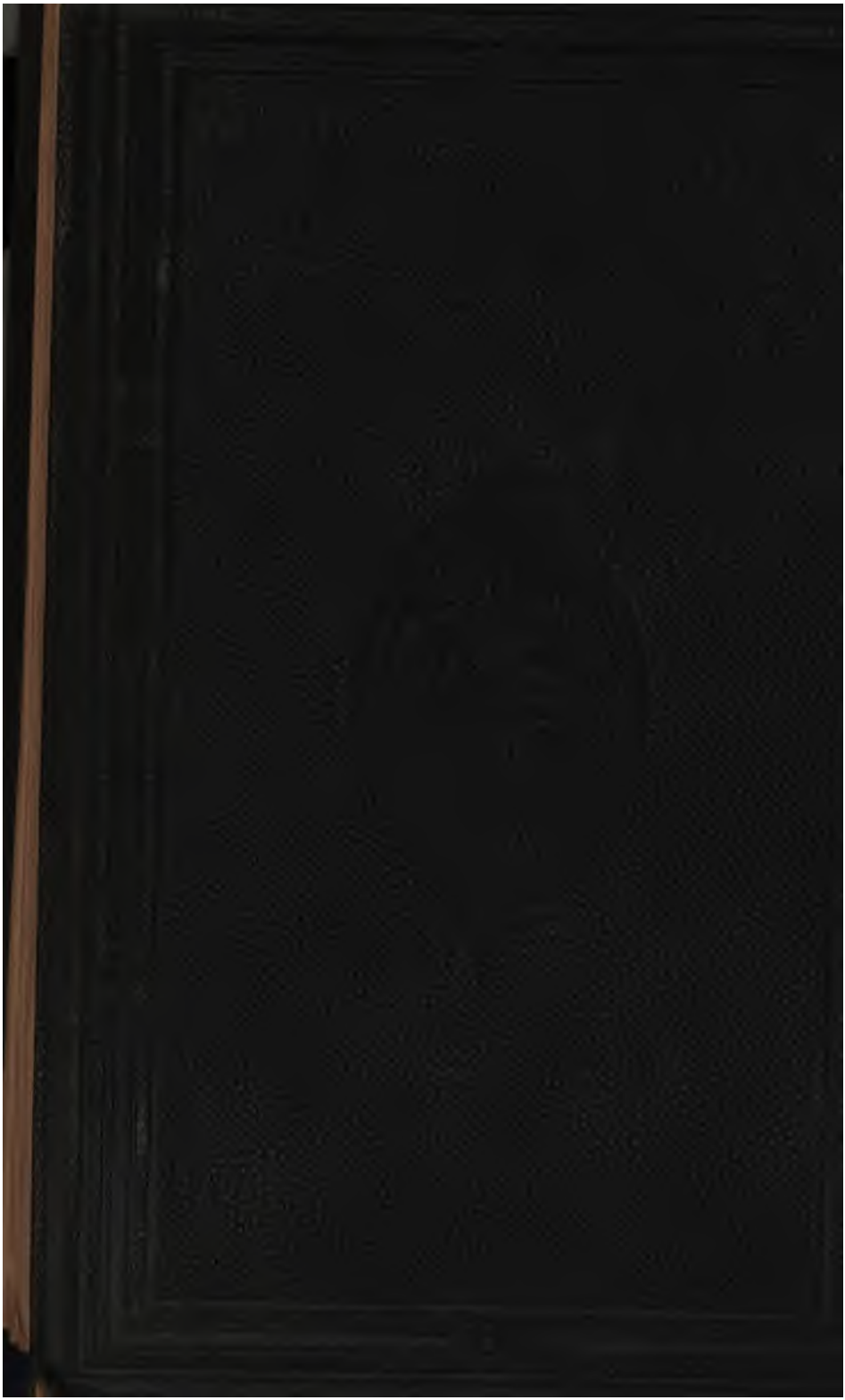
But some people are very free with public money. They not only spend it lavishly, but they blunder it away. They fool it away upon things which turn to no account.

Well, I pass on to Lord John Russell's next topic, and in that my sympathies are with him. He says, the government will introduce a bill to enable the parliament of Canada to dispose of the clergy reserves. . . . Lord John Russell then comes, not to an announcement, but to a postponement; with careful steps, and looking wistfully on either side, he approaches the subject of reform; and he thinks that he will put it off to another session, for fear that it should stand in the way of rectifying the injustice of the income-tax. Well, now, really, the injustice of the income-tax ought to be amended; but I do not see why we should wait for that, and postpone the greatest amendment of all that a statesman can contemplate. Lord John broaches the question, whether they should endeavour to effect a renewal of the income-tax for the present year, without any observation or discussion whatever, in order that they might devote the whole of their time to the one subject of parliamentary reform. He allows the importance of the subject; but he says they want consideration; they must make preparation; there are inquiries that would be requisite; they must give up the consideration of all other measures if they are to go into the question of reform,—and especially as to bribery and corruption, he thinks it very desirable that they should wait and hear what the election committee say of the proceedings upon the late general election. Now, this is really a most lame and impotent conclusion. Why, the measures he talks of, if they be good measures, would be more energetically adopted by a reformed parliament than by an unreformed one. If corruption and other debasing influences exercise their power over the present system of representation, that surely is a reason for putting reform first, and not for putting reform last. Why, it is as if there were a drunken man, who had a great deal of business in his hands, and somebody were to advise this man to sober himself, and to attend to the mighty questions that pressed upon him; and he were to say,—"No, no; I cannot think of making myself sober at present. No, I will attend to the business now, while I am drunk, and then I shall have time to get sober at my leisure." This affliction of Lord

John Russell's about bribery and corruption is no new thing. Eighteen years ago he said it was so bad that if it went on we must come to the ballot. Eighteen years have elapsed, and we are no nearer the ballot in his mind than we were at that period. Eighteen years of observation, eighteen years of thought, eighteen years of invention, have still left us where we were, as to his perception. But they have not left the country where it was. From year to year the feeling has been growing that we must have a further reform; that we must extend the franchise, and that largely, to other classes; that we must give a wide and ample possession of the rights of citizenship, and that we must accompany the vote with that which alone can make it a free and independent vote, and enable a man to poll for whom he pleases without supervision, without the interference of patron, landlord, or any one who could bias him to be false to his own convictions and to his own preference.

Well, I have now detailed to you the measures hinted at by Lord John Russell. I am not in a strong state of health, and I feel that I can say but little more. I have detailed to you the principles on which I regard our political system, and the course of legislative and of administrative operations. I am glad and proud to find that they have your sympathy and approval. I trust that your minds will go with me in the attempt to discharge the arduous duties, and to sustain the heavy responsibilities, which the position of being one of your representatives imposes upon me. Whilst I am endeavouring to promote the adoption of reforms, you can reform yourselves. In whatever course has been erroneous or blamable in politics, you can help by petitions and remonstrances, and by keeping alive the public interest and the power of public opinion; and thus, in doing your parts, you will better enable me to fulfil mine. While I am labouring to promote the cause of education, I hope to find that amongst you, the young,—parents and children, youths,—the young especially,—there will be a sense of this great subject leading you to strive at self-education, the best of all education. Relying on you for this, I shall go forward in a strength which you alone can impart to your representative, that you may have the blessings which flow from improvements in our national policy; that you may reap the advantages, in pure and

rational enjoyment, in a fine development of human character, in kindly and amicable communications with one another, and in the consciousness of doing your part for your country's good, even while seeking your own improvement. While you will have these blessings resulting from such a course, the time is not far distant for me when I shall have to look back on my own career. If I see it connected with your efforts in this same direction, it will be with higher satisfaction that I shall make that retrospect: and whilst you, most of you, or all of you, in the vigour of life are pursuing your efforts, and enjoying good, may it be my lot to say on the bed of death, that I bless my Maker in that I leave the world better than I found it!

END OF VOL. IV.

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